The Riverside Press Cambridge

REFERENCE LIBRARY

DATE

TITLE_____

_____

AUTHOR_____

EDITION_____ SERIES_____

TYPE_____ PLATES_____

PAPER_____

Method of Printing { TEXT_____ / INSERTS_____

COVER_____

SUBCONTRACT DATA_____

_____

REMARKS_____

_____

"H M Co. Form 0-412 5M 7-47 BP"

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

By Agnes Repplier

COUNTER-CURRENTS.

AMERICANS AND OTHERS.

A HAPPY HALF-CENTURY AND OTHER ESSAYS.

IN OUR CONVENT DAYS.

COMPROMISES.

THE FIRESIDE SPHINX. With 4 full-page and 17 text Illustrations by Miss E. BONSALL.

BOOKS AND MEN.

POINTS OF VIEW.

ESSAYS IN IDLENESS.

IN THE DOZY HOURS, AND OTHER PAPERS.

ESSAYS IN MINIATURE.

A BOOK OF FAMOUS VERSE. Selected by Agnes Repplier. In Riverside Library for Young People.

THE SAME. *Holiday Edition.*

VARIA.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

IN THE DOZY HOURS

AND OTHER PAPERS

BY

AGNES REPPLIER, LITT. D.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

Copyright, 1894,
By AGNES REPPLIER.

All rights reserved.

TO

ANNIS LEE WISTER

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
In the Dozy Hours	1
A Kitten	16
At the Novelist's Table	32
In Behalf of Parents	42
Aut Cæsar, aut Nihil	60
A Note on Mirrors	76
Gifts	85
Humor: English and American	94
The Discomforts of Luxury: A Speculation	112
Lectures	123
Reviewers and Reviewed	137
Pastels: A Query	153
Guests	158
Sympathy	165
Opinions	176
The Children's Age	190
A Forgotten Poet	201
Dialogues	211
A Curious Contention	217
The Passing of the Essay	226

IN THE DOZY HOURS, AND OTHER PAPERS.

IN THE DOZY HOURS.

"MONTAIGNE and Howell's letters," says Thackeray, "are my bedside books. If I wake at night, I have one or other of them to prattle me to sleep again. They talk about themselves forever, and don't weary me. I like to hear them tell their old stories over and over again. *I read them in the dozy hours, and only half remember them.*"

In the frank veracity of this last confession there lies a pleasant truth which it is wholesome to hear from such excellent and undisputed authority. Many people have told us about the advantage of remembering what we read, and have imparted severe counsels as to ways and means. Thackeray and Charles Lamb alone have ventured to hint at the equal delight of forgetting, and of returning to some well-loved volume with recollections softened

into an agreeable haze. Lamb, indeed, with characteristic impatience, sighed for the waters of Lethe that he might have more than his due; that he might grasp a double portion of those serene pleasures of which his was no niggardly share. "I feel as if I had read all the books I want to read," he wrote disconsolately to Bernard Barton. "Oh! to forget Fielding, Steele, etc., and read 'em new!"

This is a wistful fancy in which many of us have had our share. There come moments of doubt and discontent when even a fresh novel fills us with shivery apprehensions. We pick it up reluctantly, and look at it askance, as though it were a dose of wholesome medicine. We linger sadly for a moment on the brink; and then, warm in our hearts, comes the memory of happier hours when we first read "Guy Mannering," or "The Scarlet Letter," or "Persuasion;" when we first forgot the world in "David Copperfield," or raced at headlong speed, with tingling veins and bated breath, through the marvelous "Woman in White." Alas! why were we so ravenous in our youth? Like the Prodigal Son, we consumed all our fortune in a few short years, and now the

husks, though very excellent husks indeed, and highly recommended for their nourishing and stimulating qualities by the critic doctors of the day, seem to our jaded tastes a trifle dry and savorless. If only we could forget the old, beloved books, and "read 'em new"! With many this is not possible, for the impression which they make is too vivid to be obliterated, or even softened, by time. We may re-read them, if we choose. We do re-read them often, for the sake of lingering repeatedly over each familiar page, but we can never "read 'em new." The thrill of anticipation, the joyous pursuit, the sustained interest, the final satisfaction, — all these sensations of delight belong to our earliest acquaintance with literature. They are part of the sunshine which gilds the halcyon days of youth.

But other books there be, — and it is well for us that this is so, — whose tranquil mission is to soothe our grayer years. These faithful comrades are the "bedside" friends whom Thackeray loved, to whom he returned night after night in the dozy hours, and in whose generous companionship he found respite from the fretful cares of day. These are the vol-

umes which should stand on a sacred shelf apart, and over them a bust of Hermes, god of good dreams and quiet slumbers, whom the wise ancients honored soberly, as having the best of all guerdons in his keeping. As for the company on that shelf, there is room and to spare for poets, and novelists, and letter-writers; room for those "large, still books" so dear to Tennyson's soul, and for essays, and gossipy memoirs, and gentle, old-time manuals of devotion, and ghost lore, untainted by modern research, and for the "lying, readable histories," which grow every year rarer and more beloved. There is no room for self-conscious realism picking its little steps along; nor for socialistic dramas, hot with sin; nor ethical problems, disguised as stories; nor "heroes of complex, psychological interest," whatever they may mean; nor inarticulate verse; nor angry, anarchical reformers; nor dismal records of vice and disease parading in the covers of a novel. These things are all admirable in their way, but they are not the books which the calm Hermes takes under his benign protection. Dull, even, they may be, and provocative of slumber; but the road to fair dreams

lies now, as in the days of the heroes, through the shining portals of ivory.

Montaigne and James Howell, then, were Thackeray's bedside favorites, — "the Perigourdin gentleman, and the priggish little clerk of King Charles's Council;" and with these two "dear old friends" he whiled away many a midnight hour. The charm of both lay, perhaps, not merely in their diverting gossip, nor in their wide acquaintance with men and life, but in their serene and enviable uncontentiousness. Both knew how to follow the sagacious counsel of Marcus Aurelius, and save themselves a world of trouble by having no opinions on a great variety of subjects. "I seldom consult others," writes Montaigne placidly, "and am seldom attended to; and I know no concern, either public or private, which has been mended or bettered by my advice." Ah! what a man was there! What a friend to have and to hold! What a courtier, and what a country gentleman! It is pleasant to think that this embodiment of genial tolerance was a contemporary of John Calvin's; that this fine scholar, to whom a few books were as good as many, lived unfretted by the

angry turbulence of men all bent on pulling the world in their own narrow paths. What wonder that Thackeray forgave him many sins for the sake of his leisurely charm and wise philosophy! In fact, James Howell, the "priggish little clerk," was not withheld by his priggishness from relating a host of things which are hardly fit to hear. Those were not reticent days, and men wrote freely about matters which it is perhaps as healthy and as agreeable to let alone. But Howell was nevertheless a sincere Churchman as well as a sincere Royalist. He was sound throughout; and if he lacked the genius and the philosophy of Montaigne, he was his equal in worldly knowledge and in tolerant good temper. He heard, enjoyed, and repeated all the gossip of foreign courts, all the "severe jests" which passed from lip to lip. He loved the beauty of Italy, the wit of France, the spirit of the Netherlands, and the valor of Spain. The first handsome woman that earth ever saw, he tells us, was made of Venice glass, as beautiful and as brittle as are her descendants to-day. Moreover, "Eve spake Italian, when Adam was seduced;" for in that beguiling tongue, in those soft, per-

suasive accents, she felt herself to be most irresistible.

There is really, as Thackeray well knew, a great deal of pleasing information to be gathered from the "Familiar Letters," and no pedagogic pride, no spirit of carping criticism, mars their delightful flavor. The more wonderful the tale, the more serene the composure with which it is narrated. Howell sees in Holland a church monument "where an earl and a lady are engraven, with three hundred and sixty-five children about them, which were all delivered at one birth." Nay, more, he sees "the two basins in which they were christened, and the bishop's name who did it, not yet two hundred years ago;" so what reasonable room is left for doubt? He tells us the well-authenticated story of the bird with a white breast which visited every member of the Oxenham family immediately before death; and also the "choice history" of Captain Coucy, who, dying in Hungary, sent his heart back to France, as a gift to his own true love. She, however, had been forced by her father into a reluctant and unhappy marriage; and her husband, intercepting the token, had it

cooked into a "well-relished dish," which he persuaded his wife to eat. When she had obeyed, he told her, in cruel sport, the ghastly nature of the food; but she, "in a sudden exaltation of joy, and with a far-fetch'd sigh, cried, 'This is a precious cordial indeed,' and so lick'd the dish, saying, 'It is so precious that 't is pity to put ever any meat upon it.' So she went to her chamber, and in the morning she was found stone dead." Did ever rueful tale have such triumphant ending?

Of other letter-writers, Charles Lamb and Madame de Sévigné are perhaps best suited for our dozy hours, because they are sure to put us into a good and amiable frame of mind, fit for fair slumber and the ivory gates. Moreover, the bulk of Madame de Sévigné's correspondence is so great that, unless we have been very faithful and constant readers, we are likely to open into something which is new to us; and as for Lamb, those who love him at all love him so well that it matters little which of his letters they read, or how often they have read them before. Only it is best to select those written in the meridian of his life. The earlier ones are too painful, the later ones too

sad. Let us take him at his happiest, and be happy with him for an hour; for, unless we go cheerfully to bed, the portals of horn open for us with sullen murmur, and fretful dreams, more disquieting than even the troubled thoughts of day, flit batlike round our melancholy pillows.

Miss Austen is likewise the best of midnight friends. There stand her novels, few in number and shabby with much handling, and the god Hermes smiles upon them kindly. We have known them well for years. There is no fresh nook to be explored, no forgotten page to be revisited. But we will take one down, and re-read for the fiftieth time the history of the theatricals at Mansfield Park; and see Mr. Yates ranting by himself in the dining-room, and the indefatigable lovers rehearsing amorously on the stage, and poor Mr. Rushworth stumbling through his two-and-forty speeches, and Fanny Price, in the chilly little schoolroom, listening disconsolately as her cousin Edmund and Mary Crawford go through their parts with more spirit and animation than the occasion seems to demand. When Sir Thomas returns, most inopportunely, from

Antigua, we lay down the book with a sigh of gentle satisfaction, knowing that we shall find all these people in the morning just where they belong, and not, after the fashion of some modern novels, spirited overnight to the antipodes, with a breakneck gap of months or years to be spanned by our drooping imaginations. Sir Walter Scott tells us, with tacit approbation, of an old lady who always had Sir Charles Grandison read to her when she felt drowsy; because, should she fall asleep and waken up again, she would lose nothing of the story, but would find the characters just where she had left them, "conversing in the cedar-parlour." It would be possible to take a refreshing nap — did our sympathy allow us such an alleviation — while Clarissa Harlowe is writing, on some tiny scraps of hidden paper, letters which fill a dozen printed pages.

Lovers of George Borrow are wont to claim that he is one of the choicest of bedside comrades. Mr. Birrell, indeed, stoutly maintains that slumber, healthy and calm, follows the reading of his books just as it follows a brisk walk or rattling drive. "A single chapter of

Borrow is air and exercise." Neither need we be very wide awake when we skim over his pages. He can be read with half-closed eyes, and we feel his stir and animation pleasantly from without, just as we feel the motion of a carriage when we are heavy with sleep. Peacock is too clever, and his cleverness has too much meaning and emphasis for this lazy delight. Yet, nevertheless, "The Misfortunes of Elphin" is an engaging book to re-read — if one knows it well already — in moments of drowsy satisfaction. Then will the convivial humor of "Seithenyn ap Seithyn" awake a sympathetic echo in our hearts, shorn for the nonce of all moral responsibility. Then will the roar of the ocean surging through the rotten dikes make the warm chimney corner doubly grateful. Then is the reader pleased to follow the fortunes of the uncrowned prince among a people who, having "no pamphleteering societies to demonstrate that reading and writing are better than meat and drink," lived without political science, and lost themselves contentedly "in the grossness of beef and ale." Peacock, moreover, in spite of his keenness and virility, is easily forgotten. We can "read

him new," and double our enjoyment. His characters seldom have any substantiality. We remember the talk, but not the talkers, and so go blithely back to those scenes of glad good-fellowship, to that admirable conservatism and that caustic wit.

Let us, then, instead of striving so strenuously to remember all we read, be grateful that we can occasionally forget. Mr. Samuel Pepys, who knew how to extract a fair share of pleasure out of life, frankly admits that he delighted in seeing an old play over again, because he was wise enough to commit none of it to memory; and Mr. Lang, who gives *his* vote to "Pepys's Diary" as the very prince of bedside books, the one "which may send a man happily to sleep with a smile on his lips," declares it owes its fitness for this post to the ease with which it can be forgotten. "Your deeds and misdeeds," he writes, "your dinners and kisses, glide from our recollections, and being read again, surprise and amuse us afresh. Compared with you, Montaigne is dry, Boswell is too full of matter; but one can take you up anywhere, and anywhere lay you down, certain of being diverted by the picture of that

companion with whom you made your journey through life. . . . You are perpetually the most amusing of gossips, and, of all who have gossiped about themselves, the only one who tells the truth."

And the poets allied with Hermes and happy slumber, — who are they? Mr. Browning is surely not one of the kindly group. I would as lief read Mr. George Meredith's prose as Mr. Browning's verse in that hour of effortless enjoyment. But Wordsworth holds some placid moments in his keeping, and we may wander on simple errands by his side, taking good care never to listen to philosophy, but only looking at all he shows us, until our hearts are surfeited with pleasure, and the golden daffodils dance drowsily before our closing eyes. Keats belongs to dreamier moods, when, as we read, the music of his words, the keen creative magic of his style, lure us away from earth. We leave the darkness of night, and the grayness of morning. We cease thinking, and are content to feel. It is an elfin storm we hear beating against the casement; it is the foam of fairy seas that washes on the shore.

"Blissfully havened both from joy and pain,"

wrapped in soft, slumberous satisfaction, we are but vaguely conscious of the enchanted air we breathe, or of our own unutterable well-being. There is no English poem, save only "Christabel," which can lead us like "The Eve of St. Agnes" straight to the ivory gates, and waft us gently from waking dreams to the mistier visions of sleep. But there are many English poets — Herrick, and Marvell, and Gray, and Cowper, and Tennyson — who have bedside verses for us all. Herrick, indeed, though breathing the freshness of morning, is a delightful companion for night. He calls us so distinctly and seductively to leave, as he did, the grievous cares of life; to close our ears to the penetrating voice of duty; to turn away our eyes from the black scaffold of King Charles; and to watch, with him, the blossoms shaken in the April wind, and the whitethorn of May time blooming on the hills, and the sheen of Julia's robe, as she goes by with laughter. This is not a voice to sway us at broad noon, when we are striving painfully to do our little share of work; but Hesperus should bring some respite even to the dutiful,

and in our dozy hours it is sweet to lay aside all labor, and keenness, and altruism. Adonis, says the old myth, fled from the amorous arms of Aphrodite to the cold Queen of Shadows who could promise him nothing but repose. Worn with passion, wearied of delight, he lay at the feet of Persephone, and bartered away youth, strength, and love for the waters of oblivion and the coveted blessing of sleep.

A KITTEN.

IF

"The child is father of the man,"

why is not the kitten father of the cat? If in the little boy there lurks the infant likeness of all that manhood will complete, why does not the kitten betray some of the attributes common to the adult puss? A puppy is but a dog, plus high spirits, and minus common sense. We never hear our friends say they love puppies, but cannot bear dogs. A kitten is a thing apart; and many people who lack the discriminating enthusiasm for cats, who regard these beautiful beasts with aversion and mistrust, are won over easily, and cajoled out of their prejudices by the deceitful wiles of kittenhood.

"The little actor cons another part,"

and is the most irresistible comedian in the world. Its wide-open eyes gleam with wonder and mirth. It darts madly at nothing at all, and then, as though suddenly checked in the pursuit, prances sideways on its hind legs

with ridiculous agility and zeal. It makes a vast pretense of climbing the rounds of a chair, and swings by the curtain like an acrobat. It scrambles up a table leg, and is seized with comic horror at finding itself full two feet from the floor. If you hasten to its rescue, it clutches you nervously, its little heart thumping against its furry sides, while its soft paws expand and contract with agitation and relief;

> "And all their harmless claws disclose,
> Like prickles of an early rose."

Yet the instant it is back on the carpet it feigns to be suspicious of your interference, peers at you out of "the tail o' its ee," and scampers for protection under the sofa, from which asylum it presently emerges with cautious trailing steps, as though encompassed by fearful dangers and alarms. Its baby innocence is yet unseared. The evil knowledge of uncanny things which is the dark inheritance of cathood has not yet shadowed its round infant eyes. Where did witches find the mysterious beasts that sat motionless by their fires, and watched unblinkingly the waxen manikins dwindling in the flame? They

never reared these companions of their solitude, for no witch could have endured to see a kitten gamboling on her hearthstone. A witch's kitten! That one preposterous thought proves how wide, how unfathomed, is the gap between feline infancy and age.

So it happens that the kitten is loved and cherished and caressed as long as it preserves the beguiling mirthfulness of youth. Richelieu, we know, was wont to keep a family of kittens in his cabinet, that their grace and gayety might divert him from the cares of state, and from black moods of melancholy. Yet, with short-sighted selfishness, he banished these little friends when but a few months old, and gave their places to younger pets. The first faint dawn of reason, the first indication of soberness and worldly wisdom, the first charming and coquettish pretenses to maturity, were followed by immediate dismissal. Richelieu desired to be amused. He had no conception of the finer joy which springs from mutual companionship and esteem. Even humbler and more sincere admirers, like Joanna Baillie, in whom we wish to believe Puss found a friend and champion,

appear to take it for granted that the kitten should be the spoiled darling of the household, and the cat a social outcast, degraded into usefulness, and expected to work for her living. What else can be understood from such lines as these?

"Ah! many a lightly sportive child,
Who hath, like thee, our wits beguiled,
To dull and sober manhood grown,
With strange recoil our hearts disown.
Even so, poor Kit! must thou endure,
When thou becomest a cat demure,
Full many a cuff and angry word,
Chid roughly from the tempting board.
And yet, for that thou hast, I ween,
So oft our favored playmate been,
Soft be the change which thou shalt prove,
When time hath spoiled thee of our love;
Still be thou deemed, by housewife fat,
A comely, careful, mousing cat,
Whose dish is, for the public good,
Replenished oft with savory food."

Here is a plain exposition of the utilitarian theory which Shakespeare is supposed to have countenanced because Shylock speaks of the "harmless, necessary cat." Shylock, forsooth! As if he, of all men in Christendom or Jewry, knew anything about cats! Small wonder that he was outwitted by Portia and

Jessica, when an adroit little animal could so easily beguile him. But Joanna Baillie should never have been guilty of those snug commonplaces concerning the

"comely, careful, mousing cat,"

remembering her own valiant Tabby who won Scott's respectful admiration by worrying and killing a dog. It ill became the possessor of an Amazonian cat, distinguished by Sir Walter's regard, to speak with such patronizing kindness of the race.

We can make no more stupid blunder than to look upon our pets from the standpoint of utility. Puss, as a rule, is another Nimrod, eager for the chase, and unwearyingly patient in pursuit of her prey. But she hunts for her own pleasure, not for our convenience; and when a life of luxury has relaxed her zeal, she often declines to hunt at all. I knew intimately two Maryland cats, well born and of great personal attractions. The sleek, black Tom was named Onyx, and his snow-white companion Lilian. Both were idle, urbane, fastidious, and self-indulgent as Lucullus. Now, into the house honored, but not served,

by these charming creatures came a rat, which secured permanent lodgings in the kitchen, and speedily evicted the maid servants. A reign of terror followed, and after a few days of hopeless anarchy it occurred to the cook that the cats might be brought from their comfortable cushions upstairs and shut in at night with their hereditary foe. This was done, and the next morning, on opening the kitchen door, a tableau rivaling the peaceful scenes of Eden was presented to the view. On one side of the hearth lay Onyx, on the other, Lilian; and ten feet away, upright upon the kitchen table, sat the rat, contemplating them both with tranquil humor and content. It was apparent to him, as well as to the rest of the household, that he was an object of absolute, contemptuous indifference to those two lordly cats.

There is none of this superb unconcern in the joyous eagerness of infancy. A kitten will dart in pursuit of everything that is small enough to be chased with safety. Not a fly on the window-pane, not a moth in the air, not a tiny crawling insect on the carpet, escapes its unwelcome attentions. It begins

to "take notice" as soon as its eyes are open, and its vivacity, outstripping its dawning intelligence, leads it into infantile perils and wrong doing. I own that when Agrippina brought her first-born son — aged two days — and established him in my bedroom closet, the plan struck me at the start as inconvenient. I had prepared another nursery for the little Claudius Nero, and I endeavored for a while to convince his mother that my arrangements were best. But Agrippina was inflexible. The closet suited her in every respect; and, with charming and irresistible flattery, she gave me to understand, in the mute language I knew so well, that she wished her baby boy to be under my immediate protection. "I bring him to you because I trust you," she said as plainly as looks can speak. "Downstairs they handle him all the time, and it is not good for kittens to be handled. Here he is safe from harm, and here he shall remain." After a few weak remonstrances, the futility of which I too clearly understood, her persistence carried the day. I removed my clothing from the closet, spread a shawl upon the floor, had the door taken from its hinges, and re-

signed myself, for the first time in my life, to the daily and hourly companionship of an infant.

I was amply rewarded. People who require the household cat to rear her offspring in some remote attic, or dark corner of the cellar, have no idea of all the diversion and pleasure that they lose. It is delightful to watch the little blind, sprawling, feeble, helpless things develop swiftly into the grace and agility of kittenhood. It is delightful to see the mingled pride and anxiety of the mother, whose parental love increases with every hour of care, and who exhibits her young family as if they were infant Gracchi, the hope of all their race. During Nero's extreme youth, there were times, I admit, when Agrippina wearied both of his companionship and of her own maternal duties. Once or twice she abandoned him at night for the greater luxury of my bed, where she slept tranquilly by my side, unmindful of the little wailing cries with which Nero lamented her desertion. Once or twice the heat of early summer tempted her to spend the evening on the porch roof which lay beneath my windows, and I have passed some anxious

hours awaiting her return, and wondering what would happen if she never came back, and I were left to bring up the baby by hand.

But as the days sped on, and Nero grew rapidly in beauty and intelligence, Agrippina's affection for him knew no bounds. She could hardly bear to leave him even for a little while, and always came hurrying back to him with a loud frightened mew, as if fearing he might have been stolen in her absence. At night she purred over him for hours, or made little gurgling noises expressive of ineffable content. She resented the careless curiosity of strangers, and was a trifle supercilious when the cook stole softly in to give vent to her fervent admiration. But from first to last she shared with me her pride and pleasure; and the joy in her beautiful eyes, as she raised them to mine, was frankly confiding and sympathetic. When the infant Claudius rolled for the first time over the ledge of the closet, and lay sprawling on the bedroom floor, it would have been hard to say which of us was the more elated at his prowess. A narrow pink ribbon of honor was at once tied around the small adventurer's neck, and he was pro-

nounced the most daring and agile of kittens. From that day his brief career was a series of brilliant triumphs. He was a kitten of parts. Like one of Miss Austen's heroes, he had air and countenance. Less beautiful than his mother, whom he closely resembled, he easily eclipsed her in vivacity and the specious arts of fascination. Never were mother and son more unlike in character and disposition, and the inevitable contrast between kittenhood and cathood was enhanced in this case by a strong natural dissimilarity which no length of years could have utterly effaced.

Agrippina had always been a cat of manifest reserves. She was only six weeks old when she came to me, and had already acquired that gravity of demeanor, that air of gentle disdain, that dignified and somewhat supercilious composure, which won the respectful admiration of those whom she permitted to enjoy her acquaintance. Even in moments of self-forgetfulness and mirth her recreations resembled those of the little Spanish Infanta, who, not being permitted to play with her inferiors, and having no equals, diverted herself as best she could with sedate and solitary

sport. Always chary of her favors, Agrippina cared little for the admiration of her chosen circle; and, with a single exception, she made no friends beyond it.

Claudius Nero, on the contrary, thirsted for applause. Affable, debonair, and democratic to the core, the caresses and commendations of a chance visitor or of a housemaid were as valuable to him as were my own. I never looked at him "showing off," as children say, — jumping from chair to chair, balancing himself on the bedpost, or scrambling rapturously up the forbidden curtains, — without thinking of the young Emperor who contended in the amphitheatre for the worthless plaudits of the crowd. He was impulsive and affectionate, — so, I believe was the Emperor for a time, — and as masterful as if born to the purple. His mother struggled hard to maintain her rightful authority, but it was in vain. He woke her from her sweetest naps; he darted at her tail, and leaped down on her from sofas and tables with the grace of a diminutive panther. Every time she attempted to punish him for these misdemeanors he cried piteously for help, and was promptly and un-

wisely rescued by some kind-hearted member of the family. After a while Agrippina took to sitting on her tail, in order to keep it out of his reach, and I have seen her many times carefully tucking it out of sight. She had never been a cat of active habits or of showy accomplishments, and the daring agility of the little Nero amazed and bewildered her. "A Spaniard," observes that pleasant gossip, James Howell, "walks as if he marched, and seldom looks upon the ground, as if he contemned it. I was told of a Spaniard who, having got a fall by a stumble, and broke his nose, rose up, and in a disdainful manner said, 'This comes of walking on the earth.' "

Now Nero seldom walked on the earth. At least, he never, if he could help it, walked on the floor; but traversed a room in a series of flying leaps from chair to table, from table to lounge, from lounge to desk, with an occasional dash at the mantelpiece, just to show what he could do. It was curious to watch Agrippina during the performance of these acrobatic feats. Pride, pleasure, the anxiety of a mother, and the faint resentment of conscious inferiority struggled for mastership in

her little breast. Sometimes, when Nero's radiant self-satisfaction grew almost insufferable, I have seen her eyelids narrow sullenly, and have wondered whether the Roman Empress ever looked in that way at her brilliant and beautiful son, when maternal love was withering slowly under the shadow of coming evil. Sometimes, when Nero had been prancing and paddling about with absurd and irresistible glee, attracting and compelling the attention of everybody in the room, Agrippina would jump up on my lap, and look in my face with an expression I thought I understood. She had never before valued my affection in all her little petted, pampered life. She had been sufficient for herself, and had merely tolerated me as a devoted and useful companion. But now that another had usurped so many of her privileges, I fancied there were moments when it pleased her to know that one subject, at least, was not to be beguiled from allegiance; that to one friend, at least, she always was and always would be the dearest cat in the world.

I am glad to remember that love triumphed over jealousy, and that Agrippina's devotion

to Nero increased with every day of his short life. The altruism of a cat seldom reaches beyond her kittens; but she is capable of heroic unselfishness where they are concerned. I knew of a London beast, a homeless, forlorn vagrant, who constituted herself an out-door pensioner at the house of a friendly man of letters. This cat had a kitten, whose youthful vivacity won the hearts of a neighboring family. They adopted it willingly, but refused to harbor the mother, who still came for her daily dole to her only benefactor. Whenever a bit of fish or some other especial dainty was given her, this poor mendicant scaled the wall, and watched her chance to share it with her kitten, her little wealthy, greedy son, who gobbled it up as remorselessly as if he were not living on the fat of the land.

Agrippina would have been swift to follow such an example of devotion. At dinner time she always yielded the precedence to Nero, and it became one of our daily tasks to compel the little lad to respect his mother's privileges. He scorned his saucer of milk, and from tenderest infancy aspired to adult food, making predatory incursions upon Agrippina's

plate, and obliging us finally to feed them in separate apartments. I have seen him, when a very young kitten, rear himself upon his baby legs, and with his soft and wicked little paw strike his mother in the face until she dropped the piece of meat she had been eating, when he tranquilly devoured it. It was to prevent the recurrence of such scandalous scenes that two dining-rooms became a necessity in the family. Yet he was so loving and so lovable, poor little Claudius Nero! Why do I dwell on his faults, remembering, as I do, his winning sweetness and affability? Day after day, in the narrow city garden, the two cats played together, happy in each other's society, and never a yard apart. Night after night they retired at the same time, and slept upon the same cushion, curled up inextricably into one soft, furry ball. Many times I have knelt by their chair to bid them both good-night; and always, when I did so, Agrippina would lift her charming head, purr drowsily for a few seconds, and then nestle closer still to her first-born, with sighs of supreme satisfaction. The zenith of her life had been reached. Her cup of contentment was full.

It is a rude world, even for little cats, and evil chances lie in wait for the petted creatures we strive to shield from harm. Remembering the pangs of separation, the possibilities of unkindness or neglect, the troubles that hide in ambush on every unturned page, I am sometimes glad that the same cruel and selfish blow struck both mother and son, and that they lie together, safe from hurt or hazard, sleeping tranquilly and always, under the shadow of the friendly pines.

AT THE NOVELIST'S TABLE.

"COMPARE," said a friend to me recently, "the relative proportion of kissing and venison pasties in Scott's novels and Miss Rhoda Broughton's," — and I did. It was a lame comparison, owing to my limited acquaintance with part of the given text; but I pursued my investigations cheerfully along the line of Waverley, and was delighted and edified by the result. Years ago, a sulky critic in Blackwood, commenting acrimoniously on Miss Susan Warner's very popular tales, asserted that there was more kissing in one of these narratives than in all the stories Sir Walter ever wrote. Probably the critic was right. As far as I can recollect Miss Warner's heroines, — and I knew several of them intimately when a child, — they were always either kissing or crying, and occasionally they did both together. Ellen Montgomery, dissolved in tears because John has forgotten to kiss her good-night, was as cheerless a companion as I

ever found in the wide world of story-book life.

But Scott's young people never seem to hunger for embraces. They allow the most splendid opportunities to slip by without a single caress. When Quentin Durward rescues the Countess Isabella at the siege of Liége, he does not pause to passionately kiss her cold lips; he gathers her up with all possible speed, and makes practical plans for getting her out of the way. When Edith Bellenden visits her imprisoned lover, no thought of kissing enters either mind. Henry Morton is indeed so overcome by "deep and tumultuous feeling" that he presses his visitor's "unresisting hands;" but even this indulgence is of brief duration. Miss Bellenden quickly recovers her hands, and begins to discuss the situation with a great deal of sense and good feeling. Henry Bertram does not appear to have stolen a single kiss from that romantic and charming young woman, Julia Mannering, in the whole course of their clandestine courtship; and the propriety of Lord Glenvarloch's behavior, when shut up in a cell with pretty Margaret Ramsay, must be remembered by all. "Naething

for you to sniggle and laugh at, Steenie," observes King James reprovingly to the Duke of Buckingham, when that not immaculate nobleman betrays some faint amusement at the young Scotchman's modesty. "He might be a Father of the Church, in comparison of you, man."

In the matter of venison pasties, however, we have a different tale to tell. There are probably ten of these toothsome dishes to every kiss, twenty of them to every burst of tears. Compare Quentin Durward as a fighter to Quentin Durward as a lover, and then, by way of understanding how he preserved his muscle, turn back to that delightful fourth chapter, where the French King plays the part of host at the famous inn breakfast. So admirably is the scene described in two short pages, so fine is the power of Scott's genial human sympathy, that I have never been able, since reading it, to cherish for Louis XI. the aversion which is his rightful due. In vain I recall the familiar tales of his cruelty and baseness. In vain I remind myself of his treacherous plans for poor Durward's destruction. 'T is useless! I cannot dissociate him from that noble meal, nor

from the generous enthusiasm with which he provides for, and encourages, the splendid appetite of youth. The inn breakfast has but one peer, even in Scott's mirthful pages, and to find it we must follow the fortunes of another monarch who masquerades to better purpose than does Maître Pierre, whose asylum is the hermitage of St. Dunstan, and whose host is the jolly Clerk of Copmanhurst. The gradual progress and slow development of the holy hermit's supper, which begins tentatively with parched pease and a can of water from St. Dunstan's well, and ends with a mighty pasty of stolen venison and a huge flagon of wine, fill the reader's heart — if he has a heart — with sound and sympathetic enjoyment. It is one of the gastronomic delights of literature. Every step of the way is taken with renewed pleasure, for the humors of the situation are as unflagging as the appetites and the thirst of the revelers. Even the quarrel which threatens to disturb the harmony of the feast only adds to its flavor. Guest and host, disguised king and pretended recluse, are as ready to fight as to eat; and, with two such champions, who shall say where the palm of victory hides?

Any weapon will suit the monk, "from the scissors of Delilah, and the tenpenny nail of Jael, to the scimitar of Goliath," though the good broadsword pleases him best. Any weapon will suit King Richard, and he is a match for Friar Tuck in all. Born brothers are they, though the throne of England waits for one, and the oaks of Sherwood Forest for the other.

> "But there is neither east, nor west, border, nor breed, nor birth,
> When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth."

In his descriptions of eating and drinking, Scott stands midway between the snug, coarse, hearty enjoyment of Dickens, and the frank epicureanism of Thackeray, and he easily surpasses them both. With Dickens, the pleasure of the meal springs from the honest appetites which meet it — appetites sharpened often by the pinching pains of hunger. With Thackeray, it is the excellence of the entertainment itself which merits approbation. With Scott, it is the spirit of genial good-fellowship which turns a venison pasty into a bond of brotherhood, and strengthens, with a runlet of canary,

the human tie which binds us man to man. Dickens tries to do this, but does not often succeed, just because he tries. A conscious purpose is an irresistible temptation to oratory, and we do not want to be preached to over a roast goose, nor lectured at through the medium of pork and greens. Scott never turns a table into a pulpit; it is his own far-reaching sympathy which touches the secret springs that move us to kind thoughts. Quentin Durward's breakfast at the inn is worthy of Thackeray. Quentin Durward's appetite is worthy of Dickens. But Quentin Durward's host — the cruel and perfidious Louis — ah! no one but Scott would have dared to paint him with such fine, unhostile art, and no one but Scott would have succeeded.

In point of detail, however, Dickens defies competition. Before his vast and accurate knowledge the puny efforts of modern realism shrink into triviality and nothingness. What is the occasional dinner at a third-class New York restaurant, the roast chicken and mashed potatoes and cranberry tart, eaten with such ostentatious veracity, when compared to that unerring observation which penetrated into

every English larder, which lifted the lid of every pipkin, and divined the contents of every mysterious and forbidding meat pie! Dickens knew when the Micawbers supped on lamb's fry, and when on breaded chops; he knew the contents of Mrs. Bardell's little saucepan simmering by the fire; he knew just how many pigeons lurked under the crust of John Browdie's pasty; he knew every ingredient — and there are nearly a dozen of them — in the Jolly Sandboys' stew. There was not a muffin, nor a bit of toasted cheese, nor a slab of pease-pudding from the cook-shop, nor a rasher of bacon, nor a slice of cucumber, nor a dish of pettitoes eaten without his knowledge and consent. And, as it cost him no apparent effort to remember and tell all these things, it costs us no labor to read them. We are naturally pleased to hear that Mr. Vincent Crummles has ordered a hot beefsteak-pudding and potatoes at nine, and we hardly need to be reminded — even by the author — of the excellence of Mr. Swiveller's purl. The advantage of unconscious realism over the premeditated article is a lack of stress on the author's part, and a corresponding lack of fatigue on ours.

Thackeray reaches the climax of really good cooking, and, with the art of a great novelist, he restrains his gastronomic details, and keeps them within proper bounds. Beyond his limits it is not wise to stray, lest we arrive at the land of gilded puppets, where Disraeli's dukes and duchesses feast forever on ortolans, and pompetones of larks, and lobster sandwiches; where young spendthrifts breakfast at five o'clock in the afternoon on soup and claret; and where the enamored Lothair feeds Miss Arundel "with cates as delicate as her lips, and dainty beverages which would not outrage their purity." The "pies and preparations of many lands" which adorn the table of that distinguished dinner-giver, Mr. Brancepeth, fill us with vague but lamentable doubts. "Royalty," we are assured, "had consecrated his banquets" and tasted of those pies; but it is the province of royalty, as Mr. Ruskin reminds us, to dare brave deeds which commoners may be excused from attempting. Hugo Bohun, at the Duke's banquet, fired with the splendid courage of his crusading ancestry, dislodges the ortolans from their stronghold of aspic jelly, and gives to the entertainment

that air of glittering unreality which was Disraeli's finest prerogative, and which has been copied with facile fidelity by Mr. Oscar Wilde. "I see it is time for supper," observes the æsthetic Gilbert of the dialogues. "After we have discussed some Chambertin and a few ortolans, we will pass on to the question of the critic, considered in the light of the interpreter." And when we read these lines, our lingering doubts as to whether Gilbert be a man or a mere mouthpiece for beautiful words, "a reed cut short and notched by the great god Pan for the production of flute-melodies at intervals," fade into dejected certainty. That touch about the ortolans is so like Disraeli, that all Gilbert's surpassing modern cleverness can no longer convince us of his vitality. He needs but a golden plate to fit him for the ducal dining-table, where royalty, and rose-colored tapestry, and "splendid nonchalance" complete the dazzling illusion. After which, we may sober ourselves with a parting glance at the breakfast-room of Tillietudlem, and at the fare which Lady Margaret Bellenden has prepared for Graham of Claverhouse and his troopers. "No tea,

no coffee, no variety of rolls, but solid and substantial viands — the priestly ham, the knightly surloin, the noble baron of beef, the princely venison pasty." Here in truth is a vigorous and an honorable company, and here is a banquet for men.

IN BEHALF OF PARENTS.

It is a thankless task to be a parent in these exacting days, and I wonder now and then at the temerity which prompts man or woman to assume such hazardous duties. Time was, indeed, when parents lifted their heads loftily in the world; when they were held to be, in the main, useful and responsible persons; when their authority, if unheeded, was at least unquestioned; and when one of the ten commandments was considered to indicate that especial reverence was their due. These simple and primitive convictions lingered on so long that some of us can perhaps remember when they were a part of our youthful creed, and when, in life and in literature, the lesson commonly taught was that the province of the parent is to direct and control, the privilege of the child is to obey, and to be exempt from the painful sense of responsibility which overtakes him in later years. In very old-fashioned books, this point of view is

strained to embrace some rather difficult conclusions. The attitude of Evelina to her worthless father, of Clarissa Harlowe to her tyrannical parents, seemed right and reasonable to the generations which first read these novels, while we of the present day are amazed at such unnatural submissiveness and loyalty. "It is hard," says Clarissa's mother, in answer to her daughter's despairing appeals, "if a father and mother, and uncles and aunts, all conjoined, cannot be allowed to direct your choice;" an argument to which the unhappy victim replies only with her tears. How one longs to offer Mrs. Harlowe some of these little manuals of advice which prove to us now so conclusively that even a young child is deeply wronged by subjection. "Looked at from the highest standpoint," says one of our modern mentors, "we have no more right to interfere with individual choice in our children than we have to interfere with the choice of friends;" a statement which, applied as it is, not to marriageable young women, but to small boys and girls, defines matters explicitly, and does away at once and forever with all superannuated theories of obedience.

A short perusal of these text-books of training would lead the uninitiated to conclude that the children of to-day are a down-trodden race, deprived of their natural rights by the ruthless despotism of parents. It is also indicated with painful and humiliating distinctness that adults have no rights — at least none that children are bound to respect — and that we have hardened ourselves into selfishness by looking at things from a grown-up, and consequently erroneous, point of view. For example, to many of us it is an annoyance when a child wantonly destroys our property. This is ungenerous. "With anointed eyes we might often see in such a tendency a great power of analysis, that needs only to be understood to secure grand results;" — which reflection should make us prompt to welcome the somewhat disastrous results already secured. I once knew a little boy who, having been taken on a visit to some relatives, succeeded within half an hour in purloining the pendulums of three old family clocks, a passion for analysis which ought to have made him one of the first mechanics of his age, had not his genius, like that of the political agita-

tor, stopped short at the portals of reconstruction.

It is hard to attune our minds to a correct appreciation of such incidents, when the clocks belong to us, and the child does n't. It is hard to be told that our pendulums are a necessary element, which we do wrong to begrudge, in the training of a boy's observation. All modern writers upon children unite in denouncing the word "don't," as implying upon every occasion a censure which is often unmerited. But this protest reminds me of the little girl who, being told by her father she must not say "I won't," innocently inquired: "But, papa, what am I to say when I mean 'I won't'?" In the same spirit of uncertainty I would like to know what I am to say when I mean "don't." Auretta Roys Aldrich, who has written a book on "Children — Their Models and Critics," in which she is rather severe upon adults, tells us a harrowing tale of a mother and a five-year-old boy who sat near her one day on a railway train. The child thrust his head out of the window, whereupon the mother said tersely: "Johnnie, stop putting your head out of the window!"

That was all. No word of explanation or entreaty softened this ruthless command. Whether Johnnie obeyed or not is unrevealed, being a matter of no importance; but, "as they left the car," comments the author, "they left also an aching in my heart. I longed to clasp the mother in my arms, for she, too, had been the victim of misunderstanding; and show her, before it was too late, how she was missing the pure gold of life for herself and her little boy." Happily, before long, another mother entered, and her child also put his head as far as he could out of that troublesome window, which nobody seemed to have the sense to shut. Observing this, his wise parent sat down by his side, "made some pleasant remark about the outlook," and then gradually and persuasively revealed to him his danger, discussing the matter with "much candor and interest," until he was finally won over to her point of view, and consented of his own free will, and as a rational human being, to draw in his little head.

I think this double experience worth repeating, because it contrasts so pleasantly with the venerable anecdote which found its way

into all the reading books when I was a small child, and illustrated the then popular theory of education. It was the story of a mother who sees her boy running rapidly down a steep hill, and knows that, almost at his feet, lies an abandoned quarry, half hidden by underbrush and weeds. Sure of his obedience, she calls sharply, "Stop, Willie!" and the child, with a violent effort, stays his steps at the very mouth of the pit. Had it been necessary to convince him first that her apprehensions were well grounded, he would have broken his neck meanwhile, and our schoolbooks would have had one tale less to tell.

Still more astounding to the uninitiated is another little narrative, told with enviable gravity by Mrs. Aldrich, and designed to show how easily and deeply we wound a child's inborn sense of justice. "A beautiful boy of four whose parents were unusually wise in dealing with him" — it is seldom that a parent wins this degree of approbation — possessed a wheelbarrow of his own, in which he carried the letters daily to and from the post-office. One morning he was tardy in returning, "for there was the world to be explored"

on the way; and his mother, growing anxious, or perhaps desiring her mail, followed him to know what was the matter. She met him at the post-office door, and seeing in the barrow an envelope directed to herself, she rashly picked it up and opened it. Edwin promptly "raised a vehement cry of protest." That letter, like all the rest, had been given to him to carry, and no one else was privileged to touch it. Swiftly and repentantly his mother returned the unfortunate missive, but in vain. "The wound was too deep, and he continued to cry 'Mamma, you ought not to have done it!' over and over again between his sobs." In fact he "refused to be comforted," — comforted! — "and so was taken home as best he could be, and laid tenderly and lovingly in bed. After sleeping away *the sharpness of sorrow and disappointment*, and consequent exhaustion, the matter could be talked over; but while he was so tired, and keenly smarting under the sense of injustice done him, every word added fuel to the flame. . . . *His possessions had been taken away from him by sheer force, before which he was helpless.* That his indignation was not appeased by put-

ting the letter back into his keeping, showed that he was contending for a principle, and not for possession or any selfish interest."

Readers of George Eliot may be pleasantly reminded of that scene in the "Mill on the Floss" where Tom Tulliver unthinkingly withdraws a rattle with which he has been amusing baby Moss, "whereupon she, being a baby that knew her own mind with remarkable clearness, instantaneously expressed her sentiments in a piercing yell, and was not to be appeased even by the restoration of the rattle, feeling apparently that the original wrong of having it taken away from her remained in all its force." But to some of us the anecdote of Edwin and his wheelbarrow is more disheartening than droll. The revelation of such admirable motives underlying such inexcusable behavior puzzles and alarms us. If this four-year-old prig "contending for a principle and not for possession" be a real boy, what has become of all the dear, naughty, fighting, obstinate, self-willed, precious children whom we used to know; the children who contended joyously, not for principle, but for precedence, and to whom we could say "don't" a dozen

times a day with ample justification. Little boys ought to be the most delightful things in the world, with the exception of little girls. It is as easy to love them when they are bad as to tolerate them when they are good. But what can we do with conscientious infants to whom misbehavior is a moral obligation, and who scream in the public streets from an exalted sense of justice?

Mrs. Kate Douglas Wiggin, that ardent champion of Froebel, has also given to the world a book bearing the somewhat ominous title, "Children's Rights," but which is for the most part as interesting as it is sane. Setting aside the question of kindergartens, concerning which there are at present many conflicting opinions, it is impossible not to agree with Mrs. Wiggin in much that she states so deftly, and maintains so vivaciously. There is little doubt that the rights of the parent do infringe occasionally on the rights of the child, and that, in the absence of any standard, the child becomes a creature of circumstance. He can be fed unwholesomely, kept up late at night, dressed like Lord Fauntleroy, dosed with pernicious drugs, and humored into selfish petu-

lance at the discretion of his mother. Worse still, he can be suffered to waste away in fever pain and die, because his parents chance to be fanatics who reject the aid of medicines to trust exclusively in prayer. But granting all this, fathers and mothers have still their places in the world, and until we can fill these places with something better, it is worth while to call attention now and then to the useful part they play. It is perhaps a significant fact that mothers, simply because they are mothers, succeed better, as a rule, in bringing up their children than other women, equally loving and sensible, who are compelled to assume their duties. That old-fashioned plea "I know what is best for my child" may be derided as a relic of darkness; but there is an illuminating background to its gloom. I am not even sure that parents stand in absolute need of all the good advice they receive. I am quite sure that many trifles are not worth the serious counsels expended upon them. Reading or telling a story, for instance, has become as grave a matter as choosing a laureate, and many a mother must stand aghast at the conflicting admonitions bestowed upon her: Read

fairy tales. Don't read fairy tales. Read about elves. Don't read about ogres. Read of heroic deeds. Don't read of bloody battles. Avoid too much instruction. Be as subtly instructive as you can. Make your stories long. Make your stories short. Work the moral in. Leave the moral out. Try and please the older children. Try and charm the younger ones. Study the tastes of boys. Follow the fancies of girls. By degrees the harassed parent who endeavors to obey these instructions will cease telling stories at all, confident that the task, which once seemed so simple and easy, must lie far beyond her limited intelligence.

All that Mrs. Wiggin has to say about children's books and playthings is both opportune and true. I wish indeed she would not speak of restoring toys "to their place in education," which has a dismal sound, though she does not mean it to be taken dismally. Toys are toys to her, not traps to erudition, and the costly inanities of our modern nurseries fill her with well-warranted aversion. We are doing our best to stunt the imaginations of children by overloading them with illustrated story-books

and elaborate playthings. Little John Ruskin, whose sole earthly possessions were a cart, a ball, and two boxes of wooden bricks, was infinitely better off than the small boy of today whose real engine drags a train of real cars over a miniature elevated railway, almost as ghastly as reality, and whose well-dressed soldiers cannot fight until they are wound up with a key. "The law was that I should find my own amusement," says Ruskin; and he found it readily enough in the untrammeled use of his observation, his intelligence, and his fancy. I have known children to whom a dozen spools had a dozen distinct individualities; soldiers, priests, nuns, and prisoners of war; and to whom every chair in the nursery was a well-tried steed, familiar alike with the race-course and the Holy Land, having its own name, and requiring to be carefully stabled at night after the heroic exertions of the day. The romances and dramas of infancy need no more setting than a Chinese play, and in that limitless dreamland the transformations are as easy as they are brilliant. But no child can successfully "make believe," when he is encumbered on every side by mechanical toys so odiously

complete that they leave nothing for the imagination to supply.

In the matter of books, Mrs. Wiggin displays the same admirable conservatism, her modern instincts being checked and held in sway by the recollection of those few dear old volumes which little girls used to read over and over again, until they knew them by heart. Yet I hardly think that "naughty" is a kind word to apply to Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond, who is not very wise, I admit, and under no circumstances a prig, but always docile and charming and good. And why should the "red morocco housewife," which Rosamond, in one of her rare moments of discretion, chooses instead of a stone plum, be stigmatized as "hideous but useful." It may have been an exceedingly neat and pretty possession. We are told nothing to the contrary, and I had a brown one stamped with gold when I was a little girl, which, to my infant eyes represented supreme artistic excellence. It also hurts my feelings very much to hear Casabianca dubbed an "inspired idiot," who lacked the sense to escape. Unless the Roman sentries found dead at their posts in Pompeii were also in-

spired idiots, there should be some kinder word for the blind heroism which subordinates reason to obedience. And I am by no means sure that this form of relentless nineteenth-century criticism does not do more to vulgarize a child's mind by destroying his simple ideals, than do the frank old games which Mrs. Wiggin considers so boorish, and which fill her with "unspeakable shrinking and moral disgust." The coarseness of "Here come two ducks a-roving," which was once the blithest of pastorals, and of that curious relic of antiquity, "Green Gravel," is not of a hurtful kind, and some of these plays have a keen attraction for highly imaginative children. For my part, I do not believe that all the kindergarten games in Christendom, all the gentle joy of pretending you were a swallow and had your little baby swallows cuddled under your wing, can compare for an instant with the lost delight of playing "London Bridge" in the dusk of a summer evening, or in the dimly-lit schoolroom at bedtime. There was a mysterious fascination in the words whose meaning no one understood, and no one sought to understand: —

"Here comes a candle to light you to bed
And here comes a hatchet to cut off your head."

And then the sudden grasp of four strong little arms, and a pleasing thrill of terror at a danger which was no danger, — only a shadow and a remembrance of some dim horror in the past, living for generations in the unbroken traditions of play.

I have wandered unduly from the wrongs of parents to the rights of children, an easy and agreeable step to take. But the children have many powerful advocates, and need no help from me. The parents stand undefended, and suffer grievous things in the way of counsel and reproach. It must surprise some of them occasionally to be warned so often against undue severity. It must amaze them to hear that their lazy little boys and girls are suffering from overwork, and in danger of mental exhaustion. It must amuse them — if they have any sense of humor — to be told in the columns of a weekly paper "How to Reprove a Child," just as they are told "How to Make an Apple Pudding," and "How to Remove Grease Spots from Clothing." As for the discipline of the nursery, that has become a

matter of supreme importance to all whom it does not concern, and the suggestions offered, the methods urged, are so varied and conflicting that the modern mother can be sure of one thing only, — all that she does is wrong. The most popular theory appears to be that whenever a child is naughty it is his parent's fault, and she owes him prompt atonement for his misbehavior. "We should be astonished, if not appalled," says Mrs. Aldrich, "if we could see in figures the number of times the average child is unnecessarily censured during the first seven years of life." Punishment is altogether out of favor. Its apparent necessity arises from the ill-judged course of the father or mother in refusing to a child control over his own actions. This doctrine was expounded to us some years ago by Helen Hunt, who reasoned wisely that "needless denials" were responsible for most youthful naughtiness, and who was probably right. It would not perhaps be too much to say that if we could have what we wanted and do what we wanted all through life, we should, even as adults, be saved from a great deal of fretfulness and bad behavior.

Miss Nora Smith, who is Mrs. Wiggin's

clever collaborateur, allows, however, what she terms "natural punishment," or "natural retribution," which appears to be something like the far-famed justice of the Mikado, and is represented as being absolutely satisfactory to the child. This is a gain over the old methods which the child, as a rule, disliked; and it is also a gain over the long-drawn tests so urgently commended by Helen Hunt, whose model mother shut herself up for two whole days with her four-year-old boy, until she succeeded, by moral suasion, in inducing him to say G. During these two days the model mother's equally model husband was content to eat his meals alone, and to spend his evenings in solitude, unless he went to his club, and all her social and domestic duties were cheerfully abandoned. Her principle was, not to enforce obedience, but to persuade the child to overcome his own reluctance, to conquer his own will. With this view, she pretended for forty-eight hours that he could not pronounce the letter, and that she was there to help him to do it. The boy, baby though he was, knew better. He knew he was simply obstinate, and, with the delicious clear-sightedness of children, which ought to put all sentimental theorists

to shame, he actually proposed to his parent that she should shut him in a closet and see if that would not "make him good!" Of course the unhallowed suggestion was not adopted; but what a tale it tells of childish acumen, and of that humorous grasp of a situation which is the endowment of infancy. The dear little sensible, open-eyed creatures! See them dealing out swift justice to their erring dolls, and you will learn their views upon the subject of retribution. I once knew a father who defended himself for frequently thrashing an only and idolized son — who amply merited each chastisement — by saying that Jack would think him an idiot if he did n't. That father was lamentably ignorant of much that it behooves a father now to acquire. He had probably never read a single book designed for the instruction and humiliation of parents. He was in a state of barbaric darkness concerning the latest theories of education. But he knew one thing perfectly, and that one thing, says Sir Francis Doyle, is slipping fast from the minds of men; namely, "The intention of the Almighty that there should exist for a certain time between childhood and manhood, the natural production known as a boy."

AUT CÆSAR AUT NIHIL.

THERE is a sentence in one of Miss Mitford's earliest and most charming papers, "The Cowslip Ball," which has always delighted me by its quiet satire and admirable good-temper. She is describing her repeated efforts and her repeated failures to tie the fragrant clusters together.

"We went on very prosperously, *considering*, as people say of a young lady's drawing, or a Frenchman's English, or a woman's tragedy, or of the poor little dwarf who works without fingers, or the ingenious sailor who writes with his toes, or generally of any performance which is accomplished by means seemingly inadequate to its production."

Here is precisely the sentiment which Dr. Johnson embodied, more trenchantly, in his famous criticism of female preaching. "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog walking on its hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all." It is a senti-

ment which, in one form or another, prevailed throughout the last century, and lapped over into the middle of our own. Miss Mitford is merely echoing, with cheerful humor, the opinions of the very clever and distinguished men whom it was her good fortune to know, and who were all the more generous to her and to her sister toilers, because it did not occur to them for a moment that women claimed, or were ever going to claim, a serious place by their sides. There is nothing clearer, in reading the courteous and often flattering estimate of woman's work which the critics of fifty years ago delighted in giving to the world, than the under-current of amusement that such things should be going on. Christopher North, who has only censure and contempt for the really great poets of his day, is pleased to lavish kind words on Mrs. Hemans and Joanna Baillie, praising them as adults occasionally praise clever and good children. That neither he nor his boon companions of the "Noctes" are disposed to take the matter seriously, is sufficiently proved by North's gallant but controvertible statement that all female poets are handsome. "No truly ugly

woman ever yet wrote a truly beautiful poem the length of her little finger." The same satiric enjoyment of the situation is apparent in Thackeray's description of Barnes Newcome's lecture on "Mrs. Hemans, and the Poetry of the Affections," as delivered before the appreciative audience of the Newcome Athenæum. The distinction which the lecturer draws between man's poetry and woman's poetry, the high-flown civility with which he treats the latter, the platitudes about the Christian singer appealing to the affections, and decorating the homely threshold, and wreathing flowers around the domestic hearth; — all these graceful and generous nothings are the tributes laid without stint at the feet of that fragile creature known to our great-grandfathers as the female muse.

It may as well be admitted at once that this tone of combined diversion and patronage has changed. Men, having come in the course of years to understand that women desire to work, and need to work, honestly and well, have made room for them with simple sincerity, and stand ready to compete with them for the coveted prizes of life. This is all that can in fair-

ness be demanded ; and, if we are not equipped for the struggle, we must expect to be beaten, until we are taught, as Napoleon taught the Allies, how to fight. We gain nothing by doing for ourselves what man has ceased to do for us, — setting up little standards of our own, and rapturously applauding one another when the easy goal is reached. We gain nothing by withdrawing ourselves from the keenest competition, because we know we shall be outdone. We gain nothing by posing as "women workers," instead of simply "workers ;" or by separating our productions, good or bad, from the productions, good or bad, of men. As for exacting any special consideration on the score of sex, that is not merely an admission of failure in the present, but of hopelessness for the future. If we are ever to accomplish anything admirable, it must be by a frank admission of severe tests. There is no royal road for woman's feet to follow.

As we stand now, our greatest temptation to mediocrity lies in our misleading content; and this content is fostered by our incorrigible habit of considering ourselves a little aside from the grand march of human events. Why

should a new magazine be entitled "Woman's Progress," as if the progress of woman were one thing, and the progress of man another? If we are two friendly sexes working hand in hand, how is it possible for either to progress alone? Why should I be asked to take part in a very animated discussion on "What constitutes the success of woman?" Woman succeeds just as man succeeds, through force of character. She has no minor tests, or, if she has, they are worthless. Above all, why should we have repeated the pitiful mistake of putting woman's work apart at the World's Fair, as though its interest lay in its makers rather than in itself. Philadelphia did this seventeen years ago, but in seventeen years women should have better learned their own worth. Miss Mitford's sentence, with its italicized "considering," might have been written around the main gallery of the Woman's Building, instead of that curious jumble of female names with its extraordinary suggestion of perspective, — Mme. de Staël and Mrs. Potter Palmer, Pocahontas and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe. The erection of such a building was a tacit acknowledgment of inferior standards, and

therein lies our danger. All that was good and valuable beneath its roof should have been placed elsewhere, standing side by side with the similar work of men. All that was unworthy of such competition should have been excluded, as beneath our dignity, as well as beneath the dignity of the Exposition. Patchwork quilts in fifteen thousand pieces, paper flowers, nicely stitched aprons, and badly painted little memorandum-books do not properly represent the attitude of the ability of women. We are not begging for consideration and applause; we are striving to do our share of the world's work, and to do it as well as men.

Shall we ever succeed? It is not worth while to ask ourselves a question which none can answer. Reasoning by analogy, we never shall. Hoping in the splendid possibilities of an unknown future, we may. But idle contention over what has been done already is not precisely the best method of advance. To wrangle for months over the simple and obvious statement that there have been no great women poets, is a lamentable waste of energy, and leads to no lasting good. To examine

with fervent self-consciousness the exact result of every little step we take, the precise attitude of the world toward us, while we take it, is a retarding and unwholesome process. Why should an indefatigable philanthropist, like Miss Frances Power Cobbe, have paused in her noble labor to write such a fretful sentence as this?

"It is a difficult thing to keep in mind the true dignity of womanhood, in face of the deep, underlying contempt wherewith all but the most generous of men regard us."

Perhaps they do, though the revelation is a startling one, and the last thing we had ever suspected. Nevertheless, the sincere and single-minded worker is not asking herself anxious questions anent man's contempt, but is preserving "the true dignity of womanhood" by going steadfastly on her appointed road, and doing her daily work as well as in her lies. Neither does she consider the conversion of man to a less scornful frame of mind as the just reward of her labors. She has other and broader interests at stake. For my own part, I have a liking for those few writers who are admirably explicit in their contempt for wo-

men, and I find them more interesting and more stimulating than the "generous" men who stand forth as the champions of our sex, and are insufferably patronizing in their championship. When Schopenhauer says distinctly that women are merely grown-up babies, short-sighted, frivolous, and occupying an intermediate stage between children and men; when he protests vigorously against the absurd social laws which permit them to share the rank and titles of their husbands, and insists that all they require is to be well fed and clothed, I feel a sincere respect for this honest statement of unpopular and somewhat antiquated views. Lord Byron, it will be remembered, professed the same opinions, but his ingenuousness is by no means so apparent. Edward Fitzgerald's distaste for women writers is almost winning in its gentle candor. Ruskin, despite his passionate chivalry, reiterates with tireless persistence his belief that woman is man's helpmate, and no more. Theoretically, he is persuasive and convincing. Practically, he is untouched by the obtrusive fact that many thousands of women are never called on to be the helpmates of any men, fathers,

brothers, or husbands, but must stand or fall alone. Upon their learning to stand depends much of the material comfort, as well as the finer morality, of the future.

And surely, the first and most needful lesson for them to acquire is to take themselves and their work with simplicity, to be a little less self-conscious, and a little more sincere. In all walks of life, in all kinds of labor, this is the beginning of excellence, and proficiency follows in its wake. We talk so much about thoroughness of training, and so little about singleness of purpose. We give to every girl in our public schools the arithmetical knowledge which enables her to stand behind a counter and cast up her accounts. That there is something else which we do not give her is sufficiently proven by her immediate adoption of that dismal word, "saleslady," with its pitiful assumption of what is not, its pitiful disregard of dignity and worth. I own I am dispirited when I watch the more ambitious girls who attend our great schools of manual training and industrial art. They are being taught on generous and noble lines. The elements of beauty and appropriateness enter into their

hourly work. And yet — their tawdry finery, the nodding flower-gardens on their hats, the gilt ornaments in their hair, the soiled kid gloves too tight for their broad young hands, the crude colors they combine so pitilessly in their attire, their sweeping and bedraggled skirts, their shrill, unmodulated voices, their giggles and ill-controlled restlessness — are these the outward and visible results of a training avowedly refining and artistic? Are these the pupils whose future work is to raise the standard of beauty and harmonious development? Something is surely lacking which no technical skill can supply. Now, as in the past, character is the base upon which all true advancement rests secure.

Higher in the social and intellectual scale, and infinitely more serious in their ambitions, are the girl students of our various colleges. As their numbers increase, and their superior training becomes less and less a matter of theory, and more and more a matter of course, these students will combine at least a portion of their present earnestness with the healthy commonplace rationality of college men. At present they are laboring under the disadvan-

tage of being the exceptions instead of the rule. The novelty of their position dazes them a little; and, like the realistic story-tellers and the impressionist painters, they are perhaps more occupied with their points of view than with the things they are viewing. This is not incompatible with a very winning simplicity of demeanor, and the common jest which represents the college girl as prickly with the asperities of knowledge, is a fabric of man's jocund and inexhaustible imagination. Mr. Barrie, it is true, tells a very amusing story of being invited, as a mere lad, to meet some young women students at an Edinburgh party, and of being frightened out of his scanty self-possession when one of them asked him severely whether he did not consider that Berkeley's immaterialism was founded on an ontological misconception. But even Mr. Barrie has a fertile fancy, and perhaps the experience was not quite so bad as it sounds. There is more reason in the complaint I have heard many times from mothers, that college gives their daughters a distaste for social life, and a rather ungracious disregard for its amenities and obligations.

But college does not give men a distaste for social life. On the contrary, it is the best possible training for that bigger, broader field in which the ceaseless contact with their fellow-creatures rounds and perfects the many-sidedness of manhood. If college girls are disposed to overestimate the importance of lectures, and to underestimate the importance of balls, this is merely a transient phase of criticism, and has no lasting significance. Lectures and balls are both very old. They have played their parts in the history of the world for some thousands of years; they will go on playing them to the end. Let us not exaggerate personal preference, however contagious it may appear, into a symbol of approaching revolution.

For our great hope is this: As university training becomes less and less exceptional for girls, they will insensibly acquire broader and simpler views; they will easily understand that life is too big a thing to be judged by college codes. As the number of women doctors and women architects increases with every year, they will take themselves, and be taken by the world, with more simplicity and candor.

They will also do much better work when we have ceased writing papers, and making speeches, to signify our wonder and delight that they should be able to work at all; when we have ceased patting and praising them as so many infant prodigies. Perhaps the time may even come when women, mixing freely in political life, will abandon that injured and aggressive air which distinguishes the present advocate of female suffrage. Perhaps, oh, joyous thought! the hour may arrive when women having learned a few elementary facts of physiology, will not deem it an imperative duty to embody them at once in an unwholesome novel. These unrestrained disclosures which are thrust upon us with such curious zest, are the ominous fruits of a crude and hasty mental development; but there are some sins which even ignorance can only partially excuse. Things seen in the light of ampler knowledge have a different aspect, and bear a different significance; but the "fine and delicate moderation" which Mme. de Souza declared to be woman's natural gift, should preserve her, even when semi-instructed, from all gross offences against good taste. More-

over "whatever emancipates our minds without giving us the mastery of ourselves is destructive," and if the intellectual freedom of woman is to be a noble freedom it must not degenerate into the privilege of thinking whatever she likes, and saying whatever she pleases. That instinctive refinement which she has acquired in centuries of self-repression is not a quality to be undervalued, or lightly thrust aside. If she loses "the strength that lies in delicacy," she is weaker in her social emancipation than in her social bondage.

The word "Virago," in the Renaissance, meant a woman of culture, character, and charm; a "man-like maiden" who combined the finer qualities of both sexes. The gradual debasement of a word into a term of reproach is sometimes a species of scandal. It is wilfully perverted in the course of years, and made to tell a different tale, — a false tale, probably, — which generations receive as true. On the other hand, it sometimes marks the swift degeneracy of a lofty ideal. In either case, the shame and pity are the same. Happily, as we are past the day when men looked askance upon women's sincere efforts at ad-

vancement, so we are past the day when women deemed it profitable to ape distinctly masculine traits. We have outgrown the first rude period of abortive and misdirected energy, but it does not follow that the millennium has been reached. Mr. Arnold has ventured to say that the best spiritual fruit of culture is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarizing, yet no one recognized more clearly than he the ungracious nature of the task. What people really like to be told is that they are doing all things well, and have nothing to learn from anybody. This is the reiterated message from the gods of which the daily press delivers itself so sapiently, and by which it maintains its popularity and power. This is the tone of all the nice little papers about woman's progress, and woman's work, and woman's influence, and woman's recent successes in literature, science, and art. "I gain nothing by being with such as myself," sighed Charles Lamb, with noble discontent. "*We encourage one another in mediocrity.*" This is what we women are doing with such apparent satisfaction; we are encouraging one another in mediocrity. We

are putting up easy standards of our own, in place of the best standards of men. We are sating our vanity with small and ignoble triumphs, instead of struggling on, defeated, routed, but unconquered still, with hopes high set upon the dazzling mountain-tops which we may never reach.

A NOTE ON MIRRORS.

HEINRICH HEINE, who had a particularly nice and discriminating taste in ghosts, and who studied with such delicate pleasure the darkly woven fancies of German superstition, frankly admitted that to see his own face by moonlight in a mirror thrilled him with indefinable horror. Most of us who are blessed, or burdened, with imaginations have shared at moments in this curious fear of that smooth, shining sheet of glass, which seems to hold within itself some power mysterious and malign. By daytime it is commonplace enough, and lends itself with facile ease to the cheerful and homely nature of its surroundings. But at dusk, at night, by lamplight, or under the white, insinuating moonbeams, the mirror assumes a distinctive and uncanny character of its own. Then it is that it reflects that which we shrink from seeing. Then it is that our own eyes meet us with an unnatural stare and a piercing intelligence, as if another soul

were watching us from their depths with furtive, startled inquiry. Then it is that the invisible something in the room, from which the merciful dullness of mortality has hitherto saved us, may at any instant take sudden shape, and be seen, not in its own form, but reflected in the treacherous glass, which, like the treacherous water, has the power of betraying things that the air, man's friendly element, refuses to reveal.

This wise mistrust of the ghostly mirror is so old and so far spread that we meet with it in the folk lore of every land. An English tradition warns us that the new moon, which brings us such good fortune when we look at it in the calm evening sky, carries a message of evil to those who see it first reflected in a looking-glass. For such unlucky mortals the lunar virus distils slow poison and corroding care. The child who is suffered to see his own image in a mirror before he is a year old is marked out for trouble and many disappointments. The friends who glance at their reflections standing side by side are doomed to quick dissension. The Swedish girl who looks into her glass by candlelight risks the loss of

her lover. A universal superstition, which has found its way even to our own prosaic time and country, forbids a bride to see herself in a mirror after her toilet is completed. If she be discreet, she turns away from that fair picture which pleases her so well, and then draws on her glove, or has some tiny ribbon, flower, or jewel fastened to her gown, that the sour Fates may be appeased, and evil averted from her threshold. In Warwickshire and other parts of rural England it was long the custom to cover all the looking-glasses in a house of death, lest some affrighted mortal should behold in one the pale and shrouded corpse standing by his side. There is a ghastly story of a servant maid who, on leaving the chamber where her dead master lay, glanced in the uncovered mirror, and saw the sheeted figure on the bed beckoning her rigidly to its side.

Some such tale as this must have been told me in my infancy, for in no other way can I account for the secret terror I felt for the little oval mirror which hung by my bed at school. Every night I turned it carefully with its face to the wall, lest by some evil

chance I should arise and look in it. Every night I was tormented with the same haunting notion that I had *not* remembered to turn it; and then, shivering with cold and fright, I would creep out of bed, and, with averted head and tightly shut eyes, feel my way to the wretched thing, and assure myself of what I knew already, that its harmless back alone confronted me. I never asked myself what it was I feared to see; — some face that was not mine, some apparition born of the darkness and of my own childish terror. Nor can I truly say that this apprehension, inconvenient though it seemed on chilly winter nights, did not carry with it a vague, sweet pleasure of its own. Little girls of eleven may be no better nor wiser for the scraps of terrifying folk lore which formed part of my earliest education, yet in one respect, at least, I triumphed by their aid. Even the somewhat spiritless monotony of a convent school was not without its vivifying moments for a child who carried to bed with her each night a horde of goblin fears to keep her imagination lively.

Superstitions of a less ghostly character

cluster around the mirror, and are familiar to us all. To break one is everywhere an evil omen. "Seven years' trouble, but no want," follow fast upon such a mishap in Yorkshire, while in Scotland, the cracking of a looking-glass, like the falling of the doomed man's picture from the wall, is a presage of approaching death. Such portents as these, however, — though no one who is truly wise presumes to treat them with levity, — are powerless to thrill us with that indefinable and subtle horror which springs from causeless emotions. Scott, in his prologue to "Aunt Margaret's Mirror," has well defined the peculiar fear which is without reason and without cure. The old lady who makes her servant maid draw a curtain over the glass before she enters her bedroom, "so that she" (the maid) "may have the first shock of the apparition, if there be any to be seen," is of far too practical a turn to trouble herself about the rationality of her sensations. "Like many other honest folk," she does not like to look at her own reflection by candlelight, because it is an eerie thing to do. Yet the tale she tells of the Paduan doctor and his magic mir-

ror is, on the other hand, neither interesting nor alarming. It has all the dreary qualities of a psychical research report which cannot even provoke us to a disbelief.

In fact, divining-crystals, when known as such professionally, are tame, hard-working, almost respectable institutions. In the good old days of necromancy, magicians had no need of such mechanical appliances. Any reflecting surface would serve their turn, and a bowl of clear water was enough to reveal to them all that they wanted to know. It was of more importance, says Brand, "to make choice of a young maid to discern therein those images or visions which a person defiled cannot see." Even the famous mirror, through whose agency Dr. Dee and his seer, Kelly, were said to have discovered the Gunpowder Plot, was in reality nothing more than a black polished stone, closely resembling coal.

> "Kelly did all his feats upon
> The devil's looking-glass, a stone."

Yet in an old Prayer-Book of 1737 there is a woodcut representing the king and Sir Kenelm Digby gazing into a circular mirror, in which are reflected the Houses of Parliament,

and a man entering them with a dark lantern in his hand. Above, the eye of Providence is seen darting a ray of light upon the mirror. Below are legs and hoofs, as of evil spirits flying rapidly away. The truth is, so many conflicting details are related of Dr. Dee's useful and benevolent possession that it has lost a little of its *vraisemblance*. We are wont to rank it confusedly with such mystic treasures as the mirror which told the fortunate Alasnam whether or not a maid were as chaste as she was beautiful, or the glass which Reynard described with such minute and charming falsehoods to the royal lioness, who would fain have gratified her curiosity by a sight of its indiscreet revelations.

It is never through magic mirrors, nor crystal balls, nor any of the paraphernalia now so abundantly supplied by painstaking students of telepathy that we approach that shadowy land over which broods perpetual fear. Let us rather turn meekly back to the fairy-taught minister of Aberfoyle, and learn of him the humiliating truth that "every drop of water is a Mirrour to returne the Species of Things, were our visive Faculty sharpe enough to ap-

prehend them." In other words, we stand in need, not of elaborate appliances, but of a chastened spirit. If we seek the supernatural with the keen apprehension which is begotten of credulity and awe, we shall never find ourselves disappointed in our quest. The same reverend authority tells us that "in a Witch's Eye the Beholder cannot see his own Image reflected, as in the Eyes of other people," which is an interesting and, it may be, a very useful thing to know.

Two curious stories having relation to the ghostly character of the mirror will best serve to illustrate my text. The first is found in Shelley's journal; one of the inexhaustible store supplied to the poet by "Monk" Lewis, and is about a German lady who, dancing with her lover at a ball, saw in a glass the reflection of her dead husband gazing at her with stern, reproachful eyes. She is said to have died of terror. The second tale is infinitely more picturesque. In the church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence is the beautiful tomb of Beata Villana, the daughter of a noble house, and married in extreme youth to one of the family of Benintendi. Tradition

says that she was very fair, and that, being arrayed one night for a festival, she stood looking long in the mirror, allured by her own loveliness. Suddenly her eyes were opened, and she saw, close by her side, a demon dressed with costly raiment like her own, and decked with shining jewels like those she wore upon her arms and bosom. Appalled by this vision of evil, Beata Villana fled from the vanities of the world, and sought refuge in a convent, where she died a holy death in 1360, being then but twenty-eight years of age. Her marble effigy rests on its carven bed in the old Florentine church, and smiling angels draw back the curtains to show her sweet, dead beauty, safe at last from the perilous paths of temptation. In such a legend as this there lingers for us still the elements of mystery and of horror which centuries of prosaic progress are powerless to alienate from that dumb witness of our silent, secret hours, the mirror.

GIFTS.

THERE is a delightful story, which we owe to Charles Lever's splendid mendacity, of an old English lady who sent to Garibaldi, during that warrior's confinement at Varignano, a portly pincushion well stocked with British pins. Her enthusiastic countrywomen had already supplied their idol with woolen underwear, and fur-lined slippers, and intoxicating beverages, and other articles equally useful to an abstemious prisoner of war in a hot climate; but pins had been overlooked until this thoughtful votary of freedom offered her tribute at its shrine.

Absurd though the tale appears, it has its counterparts in more sober annals, and few men of any prominence have not bewailed at times their painful popularity. Sir Walter Scott, who was the recipient of many gifts, had his fair share of vexatious experiences, and laughs at them somewhat ruefully now and then in the pages of his journal. Eight

large and very badly painted landscapes, "in great gilded frames," were given him by one "most amiable and accomplished old lady." She had ordered them from an impoverished amateur whom she desired to befriend, and then palmed them off on Sir Walter, who was too gentle and generous to protest. A more "whimsical subject of affliction" was the presentation of two emus by a Mr. Harmer, a settler in Botany Bay, to whom Scott had given some useful letters of introduction. "I wish his gratitude had either taken a different turn, or remained as quiescent as that of others whom I have obliged more materially," writes Sir Walter in his journal. "I at first accepted the creatures, conceiving them, in my ignorance, to be some sort of blue and green parrots, which, though I do not admire their noise, might scream and yell at their pleasure, if hung up in the hall among the armor. But your emu, it seems, stands six feet high on his stocking soles, and is little better than a kind of cassowary or ostrich. Hang them! They might eat up my collection of old arms, for what I know."

Finally, like the girl who was converted at a revival, and who gave her blue ribbons to her sister because she knew they were taking her to hell, Scott got himself out of the scrape by passing on the emus, as a sort of feudal offering, to the Duke of Buccleugh, and leaving that nobleman to solve as best he could the problem of their maintenance. The whole story is very much like the experience of Mr. James Payn's lawyer friend, to whom a "grateful orphan" sent from the far East a dromedary, with the pleasant assurance that its hump was considered extremely delicate eating. As this highly respected member of the London bar could not well have the dromedary butchered for the sake of its hump,— even if he had yearned over the dish,— and as he was equally incapable of riding the beast to his office every morning, he considered himself fortunate when the Zoölogical Gardens opened their hospitable gates and the orphan's tribute disappeared therein, to be seen and heard of no more.

Charles Lamb, on the other hand, if we may trust the testimony of his letters,

appears to have derived a keen and kindly pleasure from the more reasonable and modest presents of his friends. Perhaps, like Steele, he looked upon it as a point of morality to be obliged to those who endeavored to oblige him. Perhaps it was easy for one so lovable to detect the honest affection which inspired these varied gifts. It is certain we find him returning genial thanks, now to Hazlitt for a pig, now to Wordsworth for a "great armful" of poetry, and now to Thomas Allsop for some Stilton cheese, — "the delicatest, rainbow-hued, melting piece I ever flavored." He seems equally gratified with an engraving of Pope sent by Mr. Procter, and with another pig, — "a dear pigmy," he calls it, — the gift of Mrs. Bruton. Nor is it only in these letters of acknowledgment — wherein courtesy dispenses occasionally with the companionship of truth — that Lamb shows himself a generous recipient of his friends' good will. He writes to Wordsworth, who has sent him nothing, and expresses his frank delight in some fruit which has been left early that morning at his door: —

"There is something inexpressibly pleasant to me in these presents, be it fruit, or fowl, or brawn, or what not. Books are a legitimate cause of acceptance. If presents be not the soul of friendship, they are undoubtedly the most spiritual part of the body of that intercourse. There is too much narrowness of thinking on this point. The punctilio of acceptance, methinks, is too confined and strait-laced. I could be content to receive money, or clothes, or a joint of meat from a friend. Why should he not send me a dinner as well as a desert? I would taste him in all the beasts of the field, and through all creation. Therefore did the basket of fruit of the juvenile Talfourd not displease me."

It is hard not to envy Talfourd when one reads these lines. It is hard not to envy any one who had the happiness of giving fruit, or cheese, or pigs to Charles Lamb. How gladly would we all have brought our offerings to his door, and have gone away with bounding hearts, exulting in the thought that our pears would deck his table, our pictures his wall, our books his

scanty shelves! "People seldom read a book which is given to them," observes Dr. Johnson, with his usual discouraging acumen; but Lamb found leisure, amid heavy toil, to peruse the numerous volumes which small poets as well as big ones thought fit to send him. He accepted his gifts with a charming munificence which suggests those far-off, fabulous days when presents were picturesque accessories of life; when hosts gave to their guests the golden cups from which they had been drinking; and sultans gave their visitors long trains of female slaves, all beautiful, and carrying jars of jewels upon their heads; and Merlin gave to Gwythno the famous hamper which multiplied its contents an hundredfold, and fed the starving hosts in storm-swept Caradigion. In those brave years, large-hearted men knew how to accept as well as how to give, and they did both with an easy grace for which our modern methods offer no adequate opportunity. Even in the veracious chronicles of hagiology, the old harmonious sentiment is preserved, and puts us to the blush. St. Martin sharing his cloak with

the beggar at the gates of Tours was hardly what we delight in calling practical; yet not one shivering outcast only, but all mankind would have been poorer had that mantle been withheld. King Canute taking off his golden crown, and laying it humbly on St. Edmund's shrine, stirs our hearts a little even now; while Queen Victoria sending fifty pounds to a deserving charity excites in us no stronger sentiment than esteem. It was easier, perhaps, for a monarch to do a gracious and a princely deed when his crown and sceptre were his own property instead of belonging to the state; and picturesqueness, ignore it as we may, is a quality which, like distinction, "fixes the world's ideals."

These noble and beautiful benefactions, however, are not the only ones which linger pleasantly in our memories. Gifts there have been, of a humble and domestic kind, the mere recollection of which is a continual delight. I love to think of Jane Austen's young sailor brother, her "own particular little brother," Charles, spending his first prize money in gold chains and "topaze

crosses" for his sisters. What prettier, warmer picture can be called to mind than this handsome, gallant, light-hearted lad — handsomer, Jane jealously insists, than all the rest of the family — bringing back to his quiet country home these innocent trophies of victory? Surely it was the pleasure Miss Austen felt in that "topaze" cross, that little golden chain, which found such eloquent expression in Fanny Price's mingled rapture and distress when *her* sailor brother brought her the amber cross from Sicily, and Edmund Bertram offered her, too late, the chain on which to hang it. It is a splendid reward that lies in wait for boyish generosity when the sister chances to be one of the immortals, and hands down to generations of readers the charming record of her gratitude and love.

By the side of this thoroughly English picture should be placed, in justice and in harmony, another which is as thoroughly German, — Rahel Varnhagen sending to her brother money to bring him to Berlin. The letter which accompanies this sisterly gift is one of the most touching in literature.

The brilliant, big-hearted woman is yearning for her kinsman's face. She has saved the trifling sum required through many unnamed denials. She gives it as generously as if it cost her nothing. Yet with that wise thrift which goes hand in hand with liberality, she warns her brother that her husband knows nothing of the matter. Not that she mistrusts his nature for a moment. He is good and kind, but he is also a man, and has the customary shortsightedness of his sex. "He will think," she writes, "that I have endless resources, that I am a millionaire, and will forget to economize in the future."

Ah, painful frugality of the poor Fatherland! Here is nothing picturesque, nor lavish, nor light-hearted, to tempt our jocund fancies. Yet here, as elsewhere, the generous soul refuses to be stinted of its joy; and the golden crown of King Canute is not more charming to contemplate than are the few coins wrested from sordid needs, and given with a glad munificence which makes them splendid as the ransom of a prince.

HUMOR: ENGLISH AND AMERICAN.

NATIONS, like individuals, stand self-betrayed in their pastimes and their jests. The ancient historians recognized this truth, and thought it well worth their while to gossip pleasantly into the ears of attentive and grateful generations. Cleopatra playfully outwitting Anthony by fastening a salted fish to the boastful angler's hook is no less clear to us than Cleopatra sternly outwitting Cæsar with the poison of the asp, and we honor Plutarch for confiding both these details to the world. Their verity has nothing to do with their value or our satisfaction. The mediæval chroniclers listened rapturously to the clamor of battle, and found all else but war too trivial for their pens. The modern scholar produces that pitiless array of facts known as constitutional history; and labors under the strange delusion that acts of Parliament, or acts of Congress, reform bills, and political pamphlets represent his country's life. If this sordid

devotion to the concrete suffers no abatement, the intelligent reader of the future will be compelled to reconstruct the nineteenth century from the pages of "Punch" and "Life," from faded play-bills, the records of the race-track, and the inextinguishable echo of dead laughter.

For man lives in his recreations, and is revealed to us by the search-light of an epigram. Humor, in one form or another, is characteristic of every nation; and reflecting the salient points of social and national life, it illuminates those crowded corners which history leaves obscure. The laugh that we enjoy at our own expense betrays us to the rest of the world, and the humorists of England and America have been long employed in pointing out with derisive fingers their own, and not their neighbor's shortcomings. If we are more reckless in our satire, and more amused at our own wit, it is because we are better tempered, and newer to the game. The delight of being a nation, and a very big nation at that, has not yet with us lost all the charm of novelty, and we pelt one another with ridicule after the joyously aggressive fashion of schoolboys pelting one another with snowballs. Already

there is a vast array of seasoned and recognized jokes which are leveled against every city in the land. The culture of Boston, the slowness of Philadelphia, the ostentation of New York, the arrogance and ambition of Chicago, the mutual jealousy of Minneapolis and St. Paul, — these are themes of which the American satirist never wearies, these are characteristics which he has striven, with some degree of success, to make clear to the rest of mankind. Add to them our less justifiable diversion at official corruption and mismanagement, our glee over the blunders and rascalities of the men whom we permit to govern us, and we have that curious combination of keenness and apathy, of penetration and indifference which makes possible American humor.

Now Englishmen, however prone to laugh at their own foibles, do not, as a rule, take their politics lightly. Those whom I have known were most depressingly serious when discussing the situation with friends, and most disagreeably violent when by chance they met an opponent. Neither do they see anything funny in being robbed by corporations; but,

with discouraging and unhumorous tenacity, exact payment of the last farthing of debt, fulfilment of the least clause in a charter. Our lenity in such matters is a trait which they fail to understand, and are disinclined to envy. One of the most amusing scenes I ever witnessed was an altercation between an exceedingly clever Englishwoman, who for years has taken a lively part in public measures, and a countrywoman of my own, deeply imbued with that gentle pessimism which insures contentment, and bars reform. The subject under discussion was the street-car service of Philadelphia (which would have been primitive for Asia Minor), and the Englishwoman was expressing in no measured terms her amazement at such comprehensive and unqualified inefficiency. In vain my American friend explained to her that this car-service was one of the most diverting things about our Quaker city, that it represented one of those humorous details which gave Philadelphia its distinctly local color. The Englishwoman declined to be amused. "I do not understand you in the least," she said gravely. "You have a beautiful city, of which you should be

proud. You have disgraceful streets and trams, of which you should be ashamed. Yet you ridicule your city as if you were ashamed of that, and defend your trams as if you were proud of them. If you think it funny to be imposed on, you will never be at a loss for a joke."

Yet corruption in office, like hypocrisy in religion, has furnished food for mirth ever since King Log and King Stork began their beneficent reigns. Diogenes complained that the people of Athens liked to have the things they should have held most dear pelted with dangerous banter. Kant found precisely the same fault with the French, and even the history of sober England is enlivened by its share of such satiric laughter. "Wood was dear at Newmarket," said a wit, when Sir Henry Montague received there the white staff which made him Lord High Treasurer of England, for which exalted honor he had paid King James the First full twenty thousand pounds. The jest sounds so light-hearted, so free from any troublesome resentment, that it might have been uttered in America; but it is well to remember that such witticisms pointed un-

erringly to the tragic downfall of the Stuarts. Indeed, the gayest laugh occasionally rings a death-knell, and so our humorists wield a power which could hardly be entrusted into better hands. "Punch" has the cleanest record of any English journal. It has ever — save for those perverse and wicked slips which cost it the friendship of stouthearted Richard Doyle — allied itself with honor and honesty, and that sane tolerance which is the basis of humor. "Life" has fought an even braver fight, and has been the active champion of all that is helpless and ill-treated, the advocate of all that is honorable and sincere. The little children who crawl, wasted and fever-stricken, through the heated city streets, the animals that pay with prolonged pain for the pleasures of scientific research, — these hapless victims of our advanced civilization find their best friend in this New York comic paper. The girl whose youth and innocence are bartered for wealth in the open markets of matrimony, sees no such vigorous protest against her degradation as in its wholesome pages. It is scant praise to say that "Life" does more to quicken charity, and to purify social corrup-

tion than all the religious and ethical journals in the country. This is the natural result of its reaching the proper audience. It has the same beneficent effect that sermons would have if they were preached to the non-church-going people who require them.

When we have learned to recognize the fact that humor does not necessarily imply fun, we will better understand the humorist's attitude and labors. There is nothing, as a rule, very funny, in the weekly issues of "Punch," and "Puck," and "Life." Many of the jokes ought to be explained in a key like that which accompanied my youthful arithmetic; and those which need no such deciphering are often so threadbare and feeble from hard usage, that it is scarcely decent to exact further service from them. It has been represented to us more than once that the English, being conservative in the matter of amusement, prefer those jests which, like "old Grouse in the gun-room," have grown seasoned in long years of telling. "Slow to understand a new joke," says Mrs. Pennell, "they are equally slow to part with one that has been mastered." But there are some time-honored jests — the young

housekeeper's pie, for example, and the tramp who is unable to digest it — which even a conservative American, if such an anomaly exists, would relinquish dry-eyed and smiling. It is not for such feeble waggery as this that we value our comic journals, but for those vital touches which illuminate and betray the tragic farce called life. "Punch's" cartoon depicting Bismarck as a discharged pilot, gloomily quitting the ship of state, while overhead the young emperor swaggers and smiles derisively, is in itself an epitome of history, a realization of those brief bitter moments which mark the turning-point of a nation and stand for the satire of success. "Life's" sombre picture of the young wife bowing her head despairingly over the piano, as though to shut out from her gaze her foolish, besotted husband, is an unflinching delineation of the most sordid, pitiful and commonplace of all daily tragedies. In both these masterly sketches there is a grim humor, softened by kindliness, and this is the key-note of their power. They are as unlike as possible in subject and in treatment, but the undercurrent of human sympathy is the same.

Is it worth while, then, to be so contentious

over the superficial contrasts of English and American humor, when both spring from the same seed, and nourish the same fruit? Why should we resent one another's methods, or deny one another's success? If, as our critics proudly claim, we Americans have a quicker perception of the ludicrous, the English have a finer standard by which to judge its worth. If we, as a nation, have more humor, they have better humorists, and can point serenely to those unapproached and unapproachable writers of the eighteenth century, whose splendid ringing laughter still clears the murky air. It is true, I am told now and then, with commendable gravity, that such mirth is unbecoming in a refined and critical age, and that, if I would try a little harder to follow the somewhat elusive satire of the modern analyst, I should enjoy a species of pleasantry too delicate or too difficult for laughter. I hesitate to affirm coarsely in reply that I like to laugh, because it is possible to be deeply humiliated by the contempt of one's fellow-creatures. It is possible also to be sadly confused by new theories and new standards; by the people who tell me that exaggerated types, like Mr.

Micawber and Mrs. Gamp, are not amusing, and by the critics who are so good as to reveal to me the depths of my own delusions. "We have long ago ceased to be either surprised, grieved, or indignant at anything the English say of us," writes Mr. Charles Dudley Warner. "We have recovered our balance. We know that since 'Gulliver' there has been no piece of original humor produced in England equal to Knickerbocker's 'New York;' that not in this century has any English writer equaled the wit and satire of the 'Biglow Papers.'"

Does this mean that Mr. Warner considers Washington Irving to be the equal of Jonathan Swift; that he places the gentle satire of the American alongside of those trenchant and masterly pages which constitute the landmarks of literature? "Swift," says Dr. Johnson, with reluctant truthfulness, "must be allowed for a time to have dictated the political opinions of the English nation." He is a writer whom we may be permitted to detest, but not to undervalue. His star, red as Mars, still flames fiercely in the horizon, while the genial lustre of Washington Irving grows

dimmer year by year. We can never hope to "recover our balance" by confounding values, a process of self-deception which misleads no one but ourselves.

Curiously enough, at least one Englishman may be found who cordially agrees with Mr. Warner. The Rev. R. H. Haweis has enriched the world with a little volume on American humorists, in which he kindly explains a great deal which we had thought tolerably clear already, as, for example, why Mark Twain is amusing. The authors whom Mr. Haweis has selected to illustrate his theme are Washington Irving, Dr. Holmes, Mr. Lowell, Artemus Ward, Mark Twain and Bret Harte; and he arranges this somewhat motley group into a humorous round-table, where all hold equal rank. He is not only generous, he is strictly impartial in his praise; and manifests the same cordial enthusiasm for Boston's "Autocrat" and for "The Innocents Abroad." Artemus Ward's remark to his hesitating audience: "Ladies and gentlemen! You cannot expect to go in without paying your money, but you can pay your money without going in," delights our kindly critic beyond

measure. "Was there ever a wittier motto than this?" he asks, with such good-natured exultation that we have a vague sense of self-reproach at not being more diverted by the pleasantry.

Now Mr. Haweis, guided by that dangerous instinct which drives us on to unwarranted comparisons, does not hesitate to link the fame of Knickerbocker's "New York" with the fame of "Gulliver's Travels," greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. "Irving," he gravely declares, "has all the satire of Swift, without his sour coarseness." It would be as reasonable to say, "Apollinaris has all the vivacity of brandy, without its corrosive insalubrity." The advantages of Apollinaris are apparent at first sight. It sparkles pleasantly, it is harmless, it is refreshing, it can be consumed in large quantities without any particular result. Its merits are incontestible; but when all is said, a few of us still remember Dr. Johnson — "Brandy, sir, is a drink for heroes!" The robust virility of Swift places him forever at the head of English-speaking satirists. Unpardonable as is his coarseness, shameful as is his cynicism, we must still

agree with Carlyle that his humor, "cased, like Ben Jonson's, in a most hard and bitter rind," is too genuine to be always unloving and malign.

The truth is that, when not confused by critics, we Americans have a sense of proportion as well as a sense of humor, and our keen appreciation of a jest serves materially to modify our national magniloquence, and to lessen our national self-esteem. We are good-tempered, too, where this humor is aroused, and so the frank ignorance of foreigners, the audacious disparagement of our fellow countrymen, are accepted with equal serenity. Newspapers deem it their duty to lash themselves into patriotic rage over every affront, but newspaper readers do not. Surely it is a generous nation that so promptly forgave Dickens for the diverting malice of "Martin Chuzzlewit." I heard once a young Irishman, who was going to the World's Fair, ask a young Englishman, who had been, if the streets of Chicago were paved, and the question was hailed with courteous glee by the few Americans present. Better still, I had the pleasure of listening to a citizen of Seattle, who was describing to a

group of his townspeople the glories of the Fair, and the magnitude of the city which had brought it to such a triumphant conclusion. "Chicago, gentlemen," said this enthusiastic traveler in a burst of final eloquence, "Chicago is the Seattle of Illinois." The splendid audacity of this commended it as much to one city as to the other; and when it was repeated in Chicago, it was received with that frank delight which proves how highly we value the blessed privilege of laughter.

Perhaps it is our keener sense of humor which prompts America to show more honor to her humorists than England often grants. Perhaps it is merely because we are in the habit of according to all our men of letters a larger share of public esteem than a more critical or richly endowed nation would think their labors merited. Perhaps our humorists are more amusing than their English rivals. Whatever may be the cause, it is undoubtedly true that we treat Mr. Stockton with greater deference than England treats Mr. Anstey. We have illustrated articles about him in our magazines, and incidents of his early infancy are gravely narrated, as

likely to interest the whole reading public. Now Mr. Anstey might have passed his infancy in an egg, for all the English magazines have to tell us on the subject. His books are bought, and read, and laughed over, and laid aside, and when there is a bitter cadence in his mirth, people are disappointed and displeased. England has always expected her jesters to wear the cap and bells. She would have nothing but foolish fun from Hood, sacrificing his finer instincts and his better parts on the shrine of her own ruthless desires, and yielding him scant return for the lifelong vassalage she exacted. It is fitting that an English humorist should have written the most sombre, the most heart-breaking, the most beautiful and consoling of tragic stories. Du Maurier in "Peter Ibbetson" has taught to England the lesson she needed to learn.

The best-loved workers of every nation are those who embody distinctly national characteristics, whose work breathes a spirit of wholesome national prejudice, who are children of their own soil, and cannot, even in fancy, be associated with any other art or literature save the art or literature of their fatherland.

This was the case with honest John Leech, whom England took to her heart and held dear because he was so truly English, because he despised Frenchmen, and mistrusted Irishmen, and hated Jews, and had a splendid British frankness in conveying these various impressions to the world. What would Leech have thought of Peter Ibbetson watching with sick heart the vessels bound for France! What a contrast between the cultured sympathy of Du Maurier's beautiful drawings, and the real, narrow affection which Leech betrays even for his Staffordshire roughs, who are British roughs, be it rememberd, and not without their stanch and sturdy British virtues. He does not idealize them in any way. He is content to love them as they are. Neither does Mr. Barrie endeavor to describe Thrums as a place where any but Thrums people could ever have found life endurable; yet he is as loyal in his affection for that forbidding little hamlet as if it were Florence the fair. Bret Harte uses no alluring colors with which to paint his iniquitous mining camps, but he is the brother at heart of every gambler and desperado in the diggings. Hu-

manity is a mighty bond, and nationality strengthens its fibres. We can no more imagine Bret Harte amid Jane Austen's placid surroundings, than we can imagine Dr. Holmes in a mining-camp, or Henry Fielding in Boston. Just as the Autocrat springs from Puritan ancestors, and embodies the intellectual traditions of New England, so Tom Jones, in his riotous young manhood, springs from that lusty Saxon stock, of whose courage, truthfulness, and good-tempered animalism he stands the most splendid representative. "The old order is passed and the new arises;" but Sophia Western has not yet yielded her place in the hearts of men to the morbid and self-centred heroines of modern fiction. Truest of all, is Charles Lamb who, more than any other humorist, more than any other man of letters, perhaps, belongs exclusively to his own land, and is without trace or echo of foreign influence. France was to Lamb, not a place where the finest prose is written, but a place where he ate frogs — "the nicest little delicate things — rabbity-flavored. Imagine a Lilliputian rabbit." Germany was little or nothing, and America was less. The child of London streets,

"Mother of mightier, nurse of none more dear,"

rich in the splendid literature of England, and faithful lover both of the teeming city and the ripe old books, Lamb speaks to English hearts in a language they can understand. And we, his neighbors, whom he recked not of, hold him just as dear; for his spleenless humor is an inheritance of our mother tongue, one of the munificent gifts which England shares with us, and for which no payment is possible save the frank and generous recognition of a pleasure that is without peer.

THE DISCOMFORTS OF LUXURY: A SPECULATION.

Mr. Frederick Harrison, in a caustic little paper on the Æsthete, has taken occasion to say some severely truthful things anent the dreary grandeur of rich men's houses, where each individual object is charming in itself, and out of harmony with all the rest. "I believe," he observes sadly, "that the camel will have passed through the eye of the needle before the rich man shall have found his way to enter the Kingdom of Beauty. It is a hard thing for him to enjoy art at all. The habits of the age convert him into a patron, and the assiduity of the dealers deprive him of peace."

Is it, then, the mere desire to be obliging which induces a millionaire to surround himself with things which he does not want, which nobody else wants, and which are perpetually in the way of comfort and pleasure? Does he build and furnish his house to support the dealers, to dazzle his friends, or to increase his

own earthly happiness and well-being? The serious fashion in which he goes to work admits of no backsliding, no merciful deviations from a relentless luxury. I have seen ghastly summer palaces, erected presumably for rest and recreation, where the miserable visitor was conducted from a Japanese room to a Dutch room, and thence to something Early English or Florentine; and such a jumble of costly incongruities, of carved scrolls and blue tiles and bronze screens and stained glass, was actually dubbed a home. A home! The guest, surfeited with an afternoon's possession, could escape to simpler scenes; but the master of the house was chained to all that tiresome splendor for five months of the year, and the sole compensation he appeared to derive from it was the saturnine delight of pointing out to small processions of captive friends every detail which they would have preferred to overlook. It is a painful thing, at best, to live up to one's bricabrac, if one has any; but to live up to the bricabrac of many lands and of many centuries is a strain which no wise man would dream of inflicting upon his constitution.

Perhaps the most unlovely circumstance

about the "palatial residences" of our country is that everything in them appears to have been bought at once. Everything is equally new, and equally innocent of any imprint of the owner's personality. He has not lived among his possessions long enough to mould them to his own likeness, and very often he has not even selected them himself. I have known whole libraries purchased in a week, and placed *en masse* upon their destined shelves; whole rooms furnished at one fell swoop with all things needful, from the chandelier in the ceiling to the Dresden figures in the cabinet. I have known people who either mistrusted their own tastes, or who had no tastes to mistrust, and so surrendered their houses to upholsterers and decorators, giving them *carte blanche* to do their best or worst. A room which has been the unresisting prey of an upholsterer is, on the whole, the saddest thing that money ever bought; yet its deplorable completeness calls forth rapturous commendations from those who can understand no natural line of demarcation between a dwelling-place and a shop. The same curious delight in handsome things,

apart from any beauty or fitness, has resulted in our over-ornamented Pullman cars, with their cumbrous and stuffy hangings; and in the aggressive luxury of our ocean steamers, where paint and gilding run riot, and every scrap of wall space bears its burden of inappropriate decoration. To those for whom a sea voyage is but a penitential pilgrimage, the fat frescoed Cupids and pink roses of the saloons offer no adequate compensation for their sufferings; whitewash and hangings of sackcloth would harmonize more closely with their sentiments. Yet these ornate embellishments pursue them now even to the solitude of their staterooms, and the newest steamers boast of cabins where the wretched traveler, too ill to arise from his berth, may be solaced by Cupids of his own frisking nakedly over the wash-bowl, and by pink roses in profusion festooning his narrow cell. If he can look at them without loathing, he is to be envied his unequaled serenity of mind.

It is strange that the authors who have written so much about luxury, whether they praise it satirically, like Mandeville, or con-

demn it very seriously, like Mr. Goldwin Smith, or merely inquire into its history and traditions, like that careful scholar, M. Baudrillart, should never have been struck with the amount of discomfort it entails. In modern as in ancient times, the same zealous pursuit of prodigality results in the same heavy burden of undesirable possessions. The youthful daughter of Marie Antoinette was allowed, we are told, four pairs of shoes a week; and M. Taine, inveighing bitterly against the extravagances of the French court, has no word of sympathy to spare for the unfortunate little princess, condemned by this ruthless edict always to wear new shoes. Louis XVI. had thirty doctors of his own; but surely no one will be found to envy him this royal superfluity. He also had a hundred and fifty pages, who were probably a terrible nuisance; and two chair-carriers, who were paid twenty thousand livres a year to inspect his Majesty's chairs, which duty they solemnly performed twice a day, whether they were wanted or not. The Cardinal de Rohan had all his kitchen utensils of solid silver, which must have given as much satis-

faction to his cooks as did Nero's golden fishing-hooks to the fish he caught with them. M. Baudrillart describes the feasts of Elagabalus as if their only fault was their excess; but the impartial reader, scanning each unpalatable detail, comes to a different conclusion. Thrushes' brains, and parrots' heads, peas mashed with grains of gold, beans fricasseed with morsels of amber, and rice mixed with pearls do not tempt one's fancy as either nourishing or appetizing diet; while the crowning point of discomfort was reached when revolving roofs threw down upon the guests such vast quantities of roses that they were well-nigh smothered. Better a dish of herbs, indeed, than all this dubious splendor. Nothing less enjoyable could have been invented in the interests of hospitality, save only that mysterious banquet given by Solomon the mighty, where all the beasts of the earth and all the demons of the air were summoned by his resistless talisman to do honor to the terrified and miserable banqueters.

"Le Superflu, chose très-nécessaire," to quote Voltaire's delightful phrase, is a diffi-

cult thing to handle with propriety and grace. Where the advantages of early training and inherited habits of indulgence are lacking, men who endeavor to spend a great deal of money show a pitiful incapacity for the task. They spend it, to be sure, but only in augmenting their own and their neighbors' discomfort; and even this they do in a blundering, unimaginative fashion, almost painful to contemplate. The history of Law's Bubble, with its long train of fabulous and fleeting fortunes, illustrates the helplessness of men to cope with suddenly acquired wealth. The Parisian nabob who warmed up a ragout with burning bank notes, that he might boast of how much it cost him, was sadly stupid for a Frenchman; but he was kinder to himself, after all, than the house-painter who, bewildered with the wealth of Fortunatus, could think of nothing better to do with it than to hire ninety supercilious domestics for his own misusage and oppression. Since the days of Darius, who required thirty attendants to make his royal bed, there probably never were people more hopelessly in one another's way than that little army of ninety servants await

ing orders from an artisan. The only creature capable of reveling in such an establishment was the author of "Coningsby" and "Lothair," to whom long rows of powdered footmen, "glowing in crimson liveries," were a spectacle as exhilarating as is a troop of Horse Guards to persons of a more martial cast of mind. Readers of "Lothair" will remember the home-coming of that young gentleman to Muriel Towers, where the house steward, and the chief butler, and the head gardener, and the lord of the kitchen, and the head forester, and the grooms of the stud and of the chambers stand in modest welcome behind the distinguished housekeeper, "who curtsied like the old court;" while the underlings await at a more "respectful distance" the arrival of their youthful master, whose sterling insignificance must have been painfully enhanced by all this solemn anticipation. "Even the mountains fear a rich man," says that ominous Turkish proverb which breathes the corruption of a nation; but it would have been a chicken-hearted molehill that trembled before such a homunculus as Lothair.

The finer adaptability of women makes

them a little less uncomfortable amid such oppressive surroundings, and their tamer natures revolt from ridiculous excess. They listen, indeed, with favor to the counsel of Polonius, and their habit is occasionally costlier than their purses can buy; witness that famous milliner's bill for fifteen thousand pounds, which was disputed in the French courts during the gilded reign of Napoleon III. But, as a rule, the punishment of their extravagances falls on themselves or on their husbands. They do not, as is the fashion with men, make their belongings a burden to their friends. It is seldom the mistress of a curio-laden house who insists with tireless perseverance on your looking at everything she owns; though it was a woman, and a provincial actress at that, raised by two brilliant marriages to the pinnacle of fame and fortune, who came to Abbotsford accompanied by a whole retinue of servants and several private physicians, to the mingled amusement and despair of Sir Walter. And it was a flower girl of Paris who spent her suddenly acquired wealth in the most sumptuous entertainments

ever known even to that city of costly caprice. But for stupid and meaningless luxury we must look, after all, to men: to Caligula, whose horse wore a collar of pearls, and drank out of an ivory trough; to Condé, who spent three thousand crowns for jonquils to deck his palace at Chantilly; to the Duke of Albuquerque, who had forty silver ladders among his utterly undesirable possessions. Even in the matter of dress and fashion, they have exceeded the folly of women. It is against the gallants of Spain, and not against their wives, that the good old gossip James Howell inveighs with caustic humor. The Spaniard, it would seem, "tho' perhaps he had never a shirt to his back, yet must he have a toting huge swelling ruff around his neck," for the starching of which exquisitely uncomfortable article he paid the then enormous sum of twenty shillings. It was found necessary to issue a royal edict against these preposterous decorations, which grew larger and stiffer every year, even children of tender age wearing their miniature instruments of torture. "Poverty is a most odious calling," sighs Burton with melancholy candor; but it

is not without some small compensations of its own. To realize them, we might compare one of Murillo's dirty, smiling, half-naked beggar boys with an Infanta by Velasquez, or with Moreelzee's charming and unhappy little Princess, who, in spreading ruff and stiff pearl-trimmed stomacher, gazes at us with childish dignity from the wall of Amsterdam's museum. Or we might remember the pretty story of Meyerbeer's little daughter, who, after watching for a long time the gambols of some ragged children in the street, turned sadly from the window, and said, with pathetic resignation, "It is a great misfortune to have genteel parents."

LECTURES.

"FEW of us," says Mr. Walter Bagehot in one of his most cynical moods, "can bear the theory of our amusements. It is essential to the pride of man to believe that he is industrious."

Now, is it industry or a love of sport which makes us sit in long and solemn rows in an oppressively hot room, blinking at glaring lights, breathing a vitiated air, wriggling on straight and narrow chairs, and listening, as well as heat and fatigue and discomfort will permit, to a lecture which might just as well have been read peacefully by our own firesides? Do we do this thing for amusement, or for intellectual gain? Outside, the winter sun is setting clearly in a blue-green sky. People are chatting gayly in the streets. Friends are drinking cups of fragrant tea in pleasant lamplit rooms. There are concerts, perhaps, or *matinées*, where the deft comedian provokes continuous laughter. No; it is not amusement

that we seek in the lecture-hall. Too many really amusing things may be done on a winter afternoon. Too many possible pleasures lie in wait for every spare half-hour. We can harbor no delusions on that score.

Is it industry, then, that packs us side by side in serried Amazonian ranks, broken here and there by a stray and downcast man? But on the library shelves stand thick as autumn leaves the unread books. Hidden away in obscure corners are the ripe old authors whom we know by name alone. The mist of an unspoken tongue veils from us the splendid treasures of antiquity, and we comfort ourselves with glib commonplaces about "the sympathetic study of translations." No; it can hardly be the keen desire of culture which makes us patient listeners to endless lectures. Culture is not so easy of access. It is not a thing passed lightly from hand to hand. It is the reward of an intelligent quest, of delicate intuitions, of a broad and generous sympathy with all that is best in the world. It has been nobly defined by Mr. Symonds as "the raising of the intellectual faculties to their highest potency by means of conscious training." We

cannot gain this fine mastery over ourselves by absorbing — or forgetting — a mass of details upon disconnected subjects, — "a thousand particulars," says Addison, "which I would not have my mind burdened with for a Vatican." If we will sit down and seriously try to reckon up our winnings in years of lecture-going, we may yet find ourselves reluctant converts to Mr. Bagehot's cruel conclusions. It is the old, old search for a royal road to learning. It is the old, old effort at a compromise which cheats us out of both pleasure and profit. It is the old, old determination to seek some short cut to acquirements, which, like "conversing with ingenious men," may save us, says Bishop Berkeley, from "the drudgery of reading and thinking."

The necessity of knowing a little about a great many things is the most grievous burden of our day. It deprives us of leisure on the one hand, and of scholarship on the other. At times we envy the happy Hermit of Prague, who never saw pen or ink; at times we think somewhat wistfully of the sedate and dignified methods of the past, when students, to use Sir

Walter Scott's illustration, paid their tickets at the door, instead of scrambling over the walls to distinction. It shows a good deal of agility and self-reliance to scale the walls; and such athletic interlopers, albeit a trifle disordered in appearance, are apt to boast of their unaided prowess: how with "little Latin and less Greek" they have become — not Shakespeares indeed, nor even Scotts — but prominent, very prominent citizens indeed. The notion is gradually gaining ground that common-school education is as good as college education; that extension lectures and summer classes are acceptable substitutes for continuous study and mental discipline; that reading translations of the classics is better, because easier, than reading the classics themselves; and that attending a "Congress" of specialists gives us, in some mysterious fashion, a very respectable knowledge of their specialties. It is after this manner that we enjoy, in all its varied aspects, that energetic idleness which Mr. Bagehot recommends as a deliberate sedative for our restless self-esteem.

Yet the sacrifice of time alone is worth some

sorrowful consideration. We laugh at the droning pedants of the old German universities who, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had well-nigh drowned the world with words. The Tübingen chancellor, Penziger, gave, it is said, four hundred and fifty-nine lectures on the prophet Jeremiah, and over fifteen hundred lectures on Isaiah; while the Viennese theologian, Hazelbach, lectured for twenty-two consecutive years on the first chapter of Isaiah, and was cruelly cut off by death before he had finished with his theme. But the bright side of this picture is that only students — and theological students at that — attended these limitless dissertations. Theology was then a battle-field, and the heavy weapons forged for the combat were presumed to be as deadly as they were cumbersome. During all those twenty-two years in which Herr Hazelbach held forth so mercilessly, German maidens and German matrons formed no part of his audience. They at least had other and better things to do. German artisans and German tradesmen troubled themselves little about Isaiah. German ploughmen went about their daily toil as placidly as if Herr Hazelbach

had been born a mute. The sleepy world had not then awakened to its duty of disseminating knowledge broadcast and in small doses, so that our education, as Dr. Johnson discontentedly observed of the education of the Scotch, is like bread in a besieged town,— "every man gets a little, but no man gets a full meal."

What we lack in quantity, however, we are pleased to make up in variety. We range freely over a mass of subjects from the religion of the Phœnicians to the poets of Australia, and from the Song of Solomon to the latest electrical invention. We have lectures in the morning upon Plato and Aristotle, and in the afternoon upon Emerson and Arthur Hugh Clough. We take a short course of German metaphysics, — which is supposed to be easily compressed into six lectures,— and follow it up immediately with another on French art, or the folk-lore of the North American Indians. No topic is too vast to be handled deftly, and finished up in a few afternoons. A fortnight for the Renaissance, a week for Greek architecture, ten days for Chaucer, three weeks for anthropology. It is amazing how far we can go in a winter, when

we travel at this rate of speed. "What under the sun is bringing all the women after Hegel?" asked a puzzled librarian not very long ago. "There is n't one of his books left in the library, and twenty women come in a day to ask for him." It was explained to this custodian that a popular lecturer had been dwelling with some enthusiasm upon Hegel, and that the sudden demand for the philosopher was a result of his contagious eloquence. It seemed for the nonce like a revival of pantheism; but in two weeks every volume was back in its place, and the gray dust of neglect was settling down as of yore upon each hoary head. The women, fickle as in the days of the troubadours, had wandered far from German erudition, and were by that time wrestling with the Elizabethan poets, or the constitutional history of republics. The sun of philosophy had set.

One rather dismal result of this rapid transit is the amount of material which each lecture is required to hold, and which each lecture-goer is expected to remember. A few centuries of Egyptian history or of Mediæval song are packed down by some system of

mental hydraulic pressure into a single hour's discourse; and, when they escape, they seem vast enough to fill our lives for a week. "When Macaulay talks," complained Lady Ashburton tartly, "I am not only overflowed with learning, but I stand in the slops." We have much the same uncomfortable sensation at an afternoon lecture, when the tide of information, of dry, formidable, relentless facts, rises higher and higher, and our spirits sink lower and lower with every fresh development. "The need of limit, the feasibility of performance," has not yet dawned upon the new educators who have taken the world in hand; and, as a consequence, we, the students, have never learned to survey our own intellectual boundaries. We assume in the first place that we have an intelligent interest in literature, science, and history, art, architecture, and archæology; and, in the second, that it is possible for us to learn a moderate amount about all these things without any unreasonable exertion. This double delusion lures us feebly on until we have listened to so much, and remembered so little, that we are a good deal like the infant Paul Dombey won-

dering in pathetic perplexity whether a verb always agreed with an ancient Briton, or three times four was Taurus a bull.

"When all can read, and books are plentiful, lectures are unnecessary," says Dr. Johnson, who hated "by-roads in education," and novel devices — or devices which were novel a hundred and thirty years ago — for softening and abridging hard study. He hated also to be asked the kind of questions which we are now so fond of answering in the columns of our journals and magazines. What should a child learn first? How should a boy be taught? What course of study would he recommend an intelligent youth to pursue? "Let him take a course of chemistry, or a course of rope-dancing, or a course of anything to which he is inclined," was the great scholar's petulant reply to one of these repeated inquiries; and, though it sounds ill-natured, we have some human sympathy for the pardonable irritation which prompted it. Dr. Johnson, I am well aware, is not a popular authority to quote in behalf of any cause one wishes to advance; but his heterodoxy in the matter of lectures is supported openly by

Charles Lamb, and furtively by some living men of letters, who strive, though with no great show of temerity, to stem the ever-increasing current of popular instruction. One eminent scholar, being entreated to deliver a course of lectures on a somewhat abstruse theme, replied that if people really desired information on that subject, and if they could read, he begged to refer them to two books he had written several years before. By perusing these volumes, which were easy of access, they would know all that he once knew, and a great deal more than he knew at the present time, as he had unhappily forgotten much that was in them. It would be simpler, he deemed, and it would be cheaper, than bringing him across the ocean to repeat the same matter in lectures.

As for Lamb, we have not only his frankly stated opinion, but — what is much more diverting — we have also the unconscious confession of a purely human weakness with which it is pleasant to sympathize. Like all the rest of us, this charming and fallible genius found that heroic efforts in the future cost less than very moderate exertions in the

present. He was warmly attached to Coleridge, and he held him in sincere veneration. When the poet came to London in 1816, we find Lamb writing to Wordsworth very enthusiastically, and yet with a vague undercurrent of apprehension : —

"Coleridge is absent but four miles, and the neighborhood of such a man is as exciting as the presence of fifty ordinary persons. 'T is enough to be within the whiff and wind of his genius for us not to possess our souls in quiet. If I lived with him, or with the author of 'The Excursion,' I should in a very little time lose my own identity, and be dragged along in the currents of other people's thoughts, hampered in a net."

This is well enough by way of anticipation ; but later on, when Coleridge is a fixed star in the London skies, and is preparing to give his lectures on Shakespeare and English poetry, Lamb's kind heart warms to his perpetually impecunious friend. He writes now to Payne Collier, with little enthusiasm, but with great earnestness, bespeaking his interest and assistance. He reminds Collier of his friendship and admiration for Coleridge, and bids him re-

member that he and all his family attended the poet's lectures five years before. He tells him alluringly that this is a brand-new course, with nothing metaphysical about it, and adds: "There are particular reasons just now, and have been for the last twenty years, why he [Coleridge] should succeed. He will do so with a little encouragement."

Doubtless; but it is worthy of note that the next time the subject is mentioned is in a letter to Mrs. Wordsworth, written more than two months later. The lectures are now in progress; very successful, we hear; but — Lamb has been to none of them. He intends to go soon, of course, — so do we always; but, in the mean while, he is treating resolution with a good deal of zest, and making the best plea he can for his defalcation. With desperate candor he writes: —

"I mean to hear some of the course, but lectures are not much to my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If read, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works, which you could read so much better at leisure yourself. If delivered extempore, I am always in

pain lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honor of me at the London Tavern. 'Gentlemen,' said I, and there I stopped; the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying."

We can judge pretty well from this letter just how many of those lectures on Shakespeare Lamb was likely to hear; and all doubts are set at rest when we find Coleridge, the following winter, endeavoring to lure his reluctant friend to another course by the presentation of a complimentary ticket. Even this device fails of its wonted success. Lamb is eloquent in thanks, and lame in excuses. He has been in an "incessant hurry." He was unable to go on the evening he was expected because it was the night of Kenney's new comedy, "which has utterly failed," — this is mentioned as soothing to Coleridge's wounded feelings. He has mistaken his dates, and supposed there would be no lectures in Christmas week. He is as eager to vindicate himself as Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond, and he is as sanguine as ever about the future. "I trust," he writes, "to hear many a course yet;" and

with this splendid resolution, which is made without a pang, he wanders brightly off to a more engaging topic.

It is a charming little bit of comedy, and has, withal, such a distinctly modern touch, that we might fancy it enacted in this year of grace eighteen hundred and ninety-four by any of our weak and erring friends.

REVIEWERS AND REVIEWED.

In these days of grace when all manner of evil-doers have their apologists; when we are bidden to admire the artistic spirit of Nero and the warm-hearted integrity of Henry the Eighth; when a "cult for Domitian" and a taste for Nihilists contend with each other in our estimation; it may not be ill-timed nor unduly venturesome to offer a few modest arguments in behalf of those Pariahs of modern literature, the anonymous reviewers of the press. They have been harshly abused for so many years. They have been targets for the wrath of authors, the scorn of satirists, the biting comments of injured genius. And now, when milder manners and gentler modes of speech are replacing the vigorous Billingsgate of our ancestors; when theologians and politicians make war upon one another with some show of charity and discretion, the reviewer alone is excluded from this semblance of good-will, the reviewer alone — a thing apart from

brotherhood — is pelted as openly as ever. The stones that are cast at him are so big and so hard that if he still lives, and, in a mild way, even flourishes, it must be because of his own irritating obtusiveness, because of his unpardonable reluctance to come forward decently and be killed.

Now, when I read the list of his misdeeds, as they are set forth categorically by irate novelists and poets, when I hear of his "ferocity, incompetence and dishonesty," I am filled with heroic indignation and with craven fear. But when I turn from these scathing comments to a few columns of book notices, and see for myself the amiable effort that is made in them to say something reasonably pleasant about every volume, I begin to think that Mr. Lang is right when he complains that the ordinary anonymous reviewer is, as the Scotch lassie said of a modest lover, "senselessly ceevil," good-natured and forbearing to a fault. If he sins, it is through indifference, and not through brutality. He is more anxious to spare himself than to attack his author. He has that provoking charity which is based upon unconcern, and he looks upon a book with a gentle

and weary tolerance, fatal alike to animosity and enthusiasm. To understand the annoyance provoked by this mental attitude, we must remember that the work which is thus carelessly handled is, in its writer's eyes, a thing sacred and apart; with faults perhaps,—no great book being wholly free from them,—but illustrating some particular attitude towards life, which places it beyond the pale of common, critical jurisprudence. Even the novelist of to-day sincerely believes that his point of view, his conception of his own art, and the lesson he desires to enforce are matters of vital interest to the public; and that it is crass ignorance on the reviewer's part to ignore these considerations, and to class his masterpiece with the companion stories of less self-conscious men. What is the use of superbly discarding all models, and of thanking Heaven daily one does not resemble Fielding and Scott, and Thackeray, if one cannot escape after all from the standards which these great men erected?

It is urged also against newspaper critics that they read only a small portion of the books which they pretend to criticise. This,

I believe, is true, and it accounts for the good-humor and charity they display. If they read the whole, we should have a band of misanthropes who would spare neither age nor sex, and who would gain no clearer knowledge of their subjects through this fearful sacrifice of time and temper. "To know the vintage and quality of a wine," says Mr. Oscar Wilde, "one need not drink the whole cask. One tastes it, and that is quite enough." More than enough for the reviewer very often, but too little to satisfy the author, who regards his work as Dick Swiveller regarded beer, as something not to be adequately recognized in a sip. There is a secret and wholesome conviction in the heart of every man or woman who has written a book that it should be no easy matter for an intelligent reader to lay down that book unfinished. There is a pardonable impression among reviewers that half an hour in its company is sufficient. This is as much perhaps as they can afford to give it, and to write a brief, intelligent, appreciative notice of a partly read volume is not altogether the easy task it seems. That it is constantly done, proves the reviewer to be a man

skilled in his petty craft; but we are merely paving the way to disappointment if we expect subtle analysis, or fervent eulogy, or even very discriminating criticism from his pen. He is not a Sainte-Beuve in the first place, and he has not a week of leisure in the second. We might console ourselves with the reflection that if he were a great and scholarly critic instead of an insignificant fellow-workman, our little books would never meet his eye.

Another complaint lodged periodically by discontents is that the author gains no real light from the comments passed upon his work, which are irritating and annoying without being in the smallest degree helpful. This is the substance of those sad grumblings which we heard some years ago from Mr. Lewis Morris; and this is the argument offered by Mr. Howells, who appears to think that Canon Farrar dealt a death-blow to reviewers in the simple statement that he never profited by their reviews. But at whose door lay the blame? It does not follow that, because a lesson is unlearned, it has never been taught. The Bourbons, it is said, gained nothing from some of the sharpest admonitions ever given

by history. It is worth while to consider, in this regard, an extract from the Journal of Sir Walter Scott in which he mentions an anonymous letter sent him from Italy, and full of acute, acrid criticisms on the "Life of Bonaparte." "The tone is decidedly hostile," says Sir Walter calmly, "but that shall not prevent my making use of all his corrections, where just." It is a hard matter perhaps for smaller men to preserve this admirable tranquillity under assault; to say with Epictetus, "He little knew of my other shortcomings or he would not have mentioned these alone." Yet after all, it is an advantage to be told plainly what we need to know and cannot see for ourselves. I am sure that the most valuable lesson in literary perspective I ever received came from an anonymous reviewer, who reminded me curtly that "Mr. Saltus and Leopardi are not twins of the intellect." When I first saw that sentence I felt a throb of indignation that any one should believe, or affect to believe, that I ever for a moment supposed Mr. Saltus and Leopardi *were* twins of the intellect. Afterwards, when in calmer mood I re-read the essay criticised, I was

forced to acknowledge that, if such were not my conviction, I had, to say the least, been unfortunate in my manner of putting things. I had used the two names indiscriminately and as if I thought one man every whit as worthy of illustrating my text as the other. Such moments ought to be salutary, they are so eminently cheerless. A disagreeable lesson, disagreeably imparted, is apt to be taken to heart with very beneficial results. If it is wasted, the fault does not lie with the surly truth-teller, whose thankless task has been performed with most ungracious efficacy. "Truth," says Saville, "has become such a ruining virtue, that mankind seems to be agreed to commend and avoid it."

As for the real and exasperating fault of much modern writing, its flippant and irrelevant cleverness, the critic and the reviewer stand equally guilty of the charge. Mr. Goldwin Smith observes that the province of criticism appears to be now limited to the saying of fine things; and there are moments when we feel that this unkind and forcible statement is very nearly true. The fatal and irresistible impulse to emit sparks — like the cat in the

fairy story — lures a man away from his subject, and sends him dancing over pages in a glittering fashion that is as useless as it is pretty. It is amazing how brightly he shines, but we see nothing by his light. "He uses his topic," says Mr. Saintsbury, "as a springboard or platform on and from which to display his natural grace and agility, his urbane learning, his faculty of pleasant wit." We read, and laugh, and are entertained, and seldom pause to ask ourselves exactly what it was which the writer started out to accomplish.

Now the finest characteristic of all really good criticism is its power of self-repression. It is work within barriers, work which drives straight to its goal, and does not permit itself the luxury of meandering on either side of the way. In this respect at least, it is possible for the most modest of anonymous reviewers to follow the example of the first of critics, Sainte-Beuve, who never allowed himself to be lured away from the subject in hand, and never sacrificed exactness and perspicuity to effect. If we compare his essay on the historian Gibbon with one on the same subject

by Mr. Walter Bagehot, we will better understand this admirable quality of restraint. Mr. Bagehot's paper is delightful from beginning to end; keen, sympathetic, humorous, and sparkling all over with little brilliant asides about Peel's Act, and the South Sea Company, and grave powdered footmen, and Louis XIV., "carefully amusing himself with dreary trifles." Underneath its whimsical exaggerations we recognize clearly the truthful outlines and general fidelity of the sketch. But Sainte-Beuve indulges in none of these witty and wandering fancies. He is keenly alive to the proper limitations of his subject; he has but a single purpose in mind, that of helping you to accurately understand the character and the life's work of the great historian whom he is reviewing; and, while his humor plays lambently on every page, he never makes any conscious effort to be diverting. Nothing can be more sprightly than Mr. Bagehot's account of Gibbon's early conversion to the Church of Rome, and of the horror and alarm he awoke thereby at the manor-house of Buriton, where "it would probably have occasioned less sensation if 'dear Edward' had announced his

intention of becoming a monkey." Nothing can be more dexterous than Mr. Bagehot's analysis of the cautious skepticism which replaced the brief religious fervor of youth. But when we turn back to Sainte-Beuve, we see this little sentence driven like an arrow-point straight to the heart of the mystery. "While he (Gibbon) prided himself on being wholly impartial and indifferent where creeds were concerned, he cherished, without avowing it, a secret and cold spite against religious thought, as if it were an adversary which had struck him one day when unarmed, and had wounded him." A secret and cold spite. Were ever five short words more luminously and dispassionately significant?

A sense of proportion intrudes itself so seldom into the popular criticism of to-day, that it is hardly worth while to censure the reviewer for not comprehending differences of degree. How should he, when the whole tone of modern sentiment is subversive of order and distinction; when the generally accepted opinion appears to be that we are doing everything better than it was ever done before, and have nothing to learn from any-

body? This is a pleasant opinion to entertain, but it is apt to be a little misleading. The old gods are not so readily dislodged, and their festal board is not a round table at which all guests hold equal rank. If you thrust Balzac or Tolstoi by the side of Shakespeare, the great poet, it has been well said, will, in his infinite courtesy, move higher and make room. But you cannot bid them change seats at your discretion. Parnassus is not the exclusive pasture ground of the Frenchman or of the Muscovite. "Homer often nods, but, in 'Taras Bulba,' Gogol never nods," I read not long ago in a review. The inference is plain, and quite in harmony with much that we hear every day; but how many times already has Homer been outstripped by long forgotten competitors! It is not indeed the nameless critic of the newspapers who gives utterance to these startling statements. They are signed and countersigned in magazines, and occasionally republished in fat volumes for the comfort and enlightenment of posterity. The real curiosities of criticism have ever emanated from men bearing the symbol of authority. It was no anonymous reviewer

who called Dante a "Methodist parson in Bedlam," or who said that Wordsworth's poetry would "never do," or who spoke of the "caricaturist, Thackeray." It is no anonymous reviewer now who bids us exult and be glad over the "literary emancipation of the West," as though that large and flourishing portion of the United States had hitherto been held in lettered bondage.

In fact, as one's experience in these matters increases day by day, one is fain to acknowledge that the work of the unknown or little known professional critic, faulty though it be, has certain modest advantages over the similar work of *his* critics, the poets and novelists when they take to the business of reviewing. There are several very successful story-writers who are just now handling criticism after a fashion which recalls that delightful scene in "The Monks of Thelema," where an effort to make the village maidens vote a golden apple to the prettiest of their number is frustrated by the unforeseen contingency of each girl voting for herself. In the same artless spirit, the novelist turned critic confines his good will so exclusively to his own work, or at best

to that school of fiction which his own work represents, that, while we cannot sufficiently admire his methods, we do not feel greatly stimulated by their results. As for the poet umpire, he is apt to bring an uncomfortable degree of excitability to bear upon his task. It is readily granted that Mr. Swinburne manifests at times an exquisite critical discernment, and a broad sympathy for much that is truly good; but when less gifted souls behold him foaming in Berserker wrath over insignificant trifles, they are wont to ask themselves what in the world is the matter. We can forgive him, or at least we can strive to forgive him, for reviling Byron, snubbing George Eliot, underrating George Sand, ignoring Jane Austen, calling poor Steele a "sentimental debauchee," and asserting that the only two women worthy to stand by the side of Charlotte Brontë," "the fiery-hearted vestal of Haworth" — though why "vestal," only Mr. Swinburne knows — are her sister Emily and Mrs. Browning. But when he has been permitted to do all this and a great deal more, why should he fall into a passion, and use the strongest of strong language,

because there are details in which everybody does not chance to agree with him? In so wide a world there must of necessity be many minds, and the opinions of a poet are not always beacon fires to light us through the gloom. Even the musician has been for some time prepared to step into the critical arena, and Mr. E. S. Dallos, in "The Gay Science," quotes for us a characteristic extract from Wagner, which probably means something, though only a very subtle intellect could venture to say what.

"If we now consider the activity of the poet more closely, we perceive that the realization of his intention consists solely in rendering possible the representation of the strengthened actions of his poetized forms through an exposition of their motives to the feelings, as well as the motives themselves. Also by an expression that in so far engrosses his activity, as the invention and production of this expression in truth first render the introduction of such motives and actions possible."

After this splendid example of style and lucidity, it may be that even the ordinary,

every-day, unostentatious reviewer whom we so liberally despise will be admitted to possess some few redeeming virtues.

And, in truth, patience is one of them. Think of the dull books which lie piled upon his table! Think how many they are, and how long they are, and how alike they are, and how serious they are, and how little we ourselves would care to read them! If the reviewer sometimes misses what is really good, or praises what is really bad, this does not mean that he is incompetent, dishonest, or butcherly. It means that he is human, that he is tired, perhaps a little peevish, and disposed to think the world would be a merrier place if there were fewer authors in it. The new novelist or budding poet who comes forward at this unpropitious moment is not hailed with acclamations of delight; while the conscientious worker who has spent long months in compiling the weighty memoirs of departed mediocrity is outraged by the scant attention he receives. Meanwhile the number of books increases with fearful speed. Each is the embodiment of a sanguine hope, and each claims its meed of praise. A fallible

reviewer struggles with the situation as best he can, saying pleasant things which are scantily merited, and sharp things which are hardly deserved; but striving intelligently, and with tolerable success to tell a self-indulgent public something about the volumes which it is too lazy to read for itself.

"O dreams of the tongues that commend us,
Of crowns for the laureate pate,
Of a public to buy and befriend us,
Ye come through the Ivory Gate.
But the critics that slash us and slate,
But the people that hold us in scorn,
But the sorrow, the scathe, and the hate,
Through the portals of horn."

PASTELS: A QUERY.

I SHOULD like to be told by one of the accomplished critics of the day what is — or rather what is not — a pastel? Dictionaries, with their wonted rigidity, define the word as "a colored crayon," ignoring its literary significance, and affording us no clue to its elusive and mutable characteristics. When Mr. Stewart Merrill christened his pretty little volume of translations "Pastels in Prose," he gave us to understand, with the assistance of Mr. Howells' prefatory remarks, that the name was an apt one for those brief bits of unrhymed, unrhythmical, yet highly poetic composition in the execution of which the French have shown such singular felicity and grace. Some of these delicate trifles have the concentrated completeness of a picture, and for them the name is surely not ill-chosen. Sombre, or joyous, or faintly ironical, they bring before our eyes with vivid distinctness every outline of the scene they portray.

"Padre Pugnaccio" and "Henriquez," by Louis Bertrand, and that strange lovely "Captive," by Ephraïm Mikhaël, are as admirable in their limitations as in their finish. They show us one thing only, and show it with swift yet comprehensive lucidity. But if "Padre Pugnaccio" be a pastel, then, by that same token, "Solitude" is not. It is a moderately long and wholly allegorical story, and its merits are of a different order. As for Maurice de Guérin's "Centaur," that noble fragment has nothing in common with the fragile delicacy of the pretty little picture poems which surround it. It is a masterpiece of breadth and virility. Its sonorous sentences recall the keener life of the antique world, and it stands among its unsubstantial companions like a bust of Hermes in a group of Dresden figures, all charming, but all dwarfed to insignificance by the side of that strong young splendor. To call "The Centaur" a pastel is as absurd as to call "Endymion" an etching.

However, Mr. Merrill's translations are far from defining the limits of the term. On the contrary, we have M. Paul Bourget's group of

stories, "Pastels of Men," which are not prose poems at all, nor brief pen pictures; but tales of a rather elaborate and unclean order, full of wan sentiment, and that cheerless vice which robs the soul without gratifying the body. Occasionally, as in the sketch of the poor old teacher living his meagre life from hour to hour, M. Bourget draws for us, with melancholy skill, a single scene from the painful drama of existence. This is perhaps a pastel, since the word must be employed; but why should an interminable and shifting tale about a rich young widow, who cannot make up her mind in less than a hundred pages which of her four lovers she will marry, be called by the same generic title? If it be equally applicable to every kind of story, short or long, simple or involved, descriptive or analytic, then it has no real meaning at all, and becomes a mere matter of capricious selection. "Wandering Willie's Tale," and "The Cricket on the Hearth" could with propriety have been termed pastels.

Nor does the matter stop here. In Mr. Gosse's recent volume of essays, he has included two admirable criticisms on Mr. Robert

Louis Stevenson's poetry, and on Mr. Rudyard Kipling's prose. These papers, discriminating, sympathetic, and exhaustive, are called pastels. They do not differ in any way from other critical studies of equal length and merit. They abound in agreeable quotations, and show a clear and genial appreciation of their themes. They are simply reviews of an unusually good order, and if their title be correctly applied, then it is serviceable for any piece of literary criticism which deals with a single author. Macaulay's "Madame D'Arblay," Mr. Birrell's "Emerson," Mr. Saintsbury's "Peacock," might all have been named pastels.

By this time the subject begins to grow perplexing. Miss Wilkins wanders far from her true gods, and from the sources of her genuine inspiration, to write a handful of labored sketches — pen pictures perhaps, albeit a trifle stiff in execution — which she calls pastels. Mr. Brander Matthews gives us, as his contribution to the puzzle, a vivid description of Carmencita dancing in a New York studio, and calls it a pastel. If we stray from prose to verse, we are tripped up at every step. Nebulous little couplets, songs of saddening subtlety,

weird conceits and high-pacing rhymes are thoughtfully labeled pastels, so as to give us a clue to their otherwise impenetrable obscurity. Sullen seas, and wan twilights, and dim garden paths, relieved with ghostly lilies, and white-armed women of dubious decorum, are the chief ingredients of these poetic novelties; but here is one, picked up by chance, which reads like a genial conundrum: —

> "The light of our cigarettes
> Went and came in the gloom;
> It was dark in the little room.
>
> Dark, and then in the dark,
> Sudden, a flash, a glow,
> And a hand and a ring I know.
>
> And then, through the dark, a flush,
> Ruddy and vague, the grace —
> A rose — of her lyric face."

Now, if that be a pastel, and Mr. Gosse's reviews are pastels, and M. Bourget's stories are pastels, and Maurice de Guérin's "Centaur" is a pastel, and Mr. Brander Matthews' realistic sketches are pastels, and Ephraïm Mikhaël's allegories are pastels, I should like to be told, by some one who knows, just where the limits of the term is set.

GUESTS.

A VERY charming and vivacious old lady, who had spent most of her early life in the country, once said to me that the keenest pleasure of her childhood was the occasional arrival of her mother's guests; the keenest regret, their inevitable and too speedy departure. "They seldom stayed more than a fortnight," she observed, plaintively; "though now and then some cousins prolonged their visits for another week. What I most enjoyed on these occasions was the increased good temper of my own family. Annoyances were laughed at, our noisy behavior was overlooked, conversation took an agreeable turn, and a delightful air of cheerfulness and good humor pervaded the entire household. It seemed to my infant eyes that life would be a matter of flawless enjoyment if we could only have visitors always in the house."

A little of this frankly expressed sentiment will find an echo in many hearts, and perhaps

awaken some pangs of conscience on the way. It is the restraint we put upon ourselves, the honest effort we make at amiability, which renders social intercourse possible and pleasant. When the restraint grows irksome, the amiability a burden, we pay to those we love best on earth the dubious compliment of being perfectly natural in their company. "What is the use of having a family if you cannot be disagreeable in the bosom of it?" was the explicit acknowledgment I once overheard of a service which seldom meets with such clear and candid recognition. Hazlitt himself could have given no plainer expression to a thought which few of us would care to trick out in all the undisguised sincerity of language.

Guests are the delight of leisure, and the solace of ennui. It is the steady and merciless increase of occupations, the augmented speed at which we are always trying to live, the crowding of each day with more work and amusement than it can profitably hold, which have cost us, among other good things, the undisturbed enjoyment of our friends. Friendship takes time, and we have no time to give it. We have to go to so many teas, and lectures,

and committee meetings; we have taken up so many interesting and exacting careers; we have assumed so many duties and responsibilities, that there is not a spare corner in our lives which we are free to fill up as we please. Society, philanthropy, and culture divide our waking hours. Defrauded friendship gets a few moments now and again, and is bidden to content itself, and please not to be troublesome any more. I once rashly asked a girl of twenty if she saw a great deal of a young married woman whom she had just declared to be her dearest and most cherished friend. "I never see her at all," was the satisfied answer, "except by chance, at a tea or a club meeting. We live so very far apart, as you know. *It would take the heart of an afternoon to try and make her a visit.*"

Now, to understand the charm of leisurely and sympathetic intercourse, we should read the letters of Madame de Sévigné; to appreciate the resources of ennui, we should read the novels of Jane Austen. With Madame de Sévigné guests were not useful as an alleviation of boredom; they were valuable because they added to the interest, the beauty and the zest of

life. It never occurred to this charming Frenchwoman, nor to her contemporaries, that time could be better spent than in entertaining or being entertained by friends. Conversation was not then small coin, to be paid out hastily like car-fare, merely in order to get from one necessary topic to another. It was the golden mean through which a generous regard, a graceful courtesy, or a sparkling wit lent beauty and distinction to every hour of intercourse. A little group of friends in a quiet countryside, with none of the robust diversions of English rural life. It has a sleepy sound; yet such was the pleasure-giving power of hostess and of guest that this leisurely companionship was fraught with fine delight, and its fruits are our inheritance to-day, lingering for us in the pages of those matchless letters from which time can never steal the charm.

It is Miss Austen, however, who, with relentless candor, has shown us how usefully guests may be employed as an antidote for the ennui of intellectual vacuity. They are the chosen relief for that direful dullness which country gentlemen "like Sir John Middleton," experience from lack of occupation and ideas; they

are the solace of sickly, uninteresting women who desire some one to share with them the monotonous current of existence. The Middletons, we are assured, "lived in a style of equal hospitality and elegance. They were scarcely ever without some friends staying with them in the house, and they kept more company of every kind than any other family in the neighborhood." This indulgence, it appears, while equally welcome to host and hostess, was more necessary to Sir John's happiness than to his wife's; for she at least possessed one other source of continual and unflagging diversion. "Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humored her children; and these were their only resources. Lady Middleton, however, had the advantage of being able to spoil her children all the year round, while Sir John's independent employments were in existence only half the time."

Guests play an important part in Miss Austen's novels, as they did in Miss Austen's life, and in the lives of all the hospitable country-people of her time. Moreover, the visits her heroines and their friends pay are not little tri-

fling modern affairs of a few days or a week. Distances counted for something when they had to be traveled in a carriage or a post-chaise; and when people came to see their friends in that fashion, they came to stay. Elizabeth Bennet and Maria Lucas spend six weeks with Charlotte Collins; and Lady Catherine, it will be remembered, does not at all approve of their returning home so quickly. "I expected you to stay two months," she says severely — they are not her guests at all — "I told Mrs. Collins so, before you came. There can be no occasion for your going so soon." Eleanor and Marianne Dashwood begin their visit to Mrs. Jennings the first week of January, and it is April before we find them setting forth on their return. Anne Elliot goes to Uppercross for two months, though the only inducement offered her is Mary Musgrove's prophetic remark that she does not expect to have a day's health all autumn; and her only pastime as a visitor appears to be the somewhat dubious diversion of making herself generally useful. It is a far cry from our busy age to either Miss Austen or Madame de Sévigné. The bounteous resources of a highly cultivated

leisure have never been very clearly understood by the English-speaking race. The alleviations of inactivity and ennui are no longer with us a rigorous necessity. Our vices and our virtues conspire to defraud us of that charming and sustained social intercourse which is possible only when we have the undisturbed possession of our friends; when we are so happy as to be sheltered under the same roof, to pursue the same occupations, to enjoy the same pleasures, to exchange thoughts and sentiments with entire freedom and familiarity. "I cannot afford to speak much to my friend," says Emerson, meaning that it is a privilege he neither values nor desires. We cannot afford to speak much to our friends, though we may desire it with our whole hearts, because we have been foolish enough to persuade ourselves that we have other and better things to do.

SYMPATHY.

"SYMPATHY," says Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, is a thing to be encouraged, apart from human considerations, because it supplies us with materials for wisdom. It is probably more instructive to entertain a sneaking kindness for any unpopular person than to give way to perfect raptures of moral indignation against his abstract vices."

These are brave words, and spoken in one of those swift flashes of spiritual insight which at first bewilder and then console us. We have our share of sympathy; hearty, healthy, human sympathy for all that is strong and successful; but the force of moral indignation — either our own or our neighbors' — has wellnigh cowed us into silence. The fashion of the day provides a procrustean standard for every form of distinction; and, if it does not fit, it is lopped down to the necessary insignificance. Those stern, efficient, one-sided men of action who made history at the expense of their finer

natures; those fiery enthusiasts who bore down all just opposition to their designs; those loyal servants who saw no right nor wrong save in the will of their sovereigns; those keen-eyed statesmen who served their countries with craft, and guile, and dissimulation; those light-hearted prodigals who flung away their lives with a smile; — are none of these to yield us either edification or delight? "Do great deeds, and they will sing themselves," says Emerson; but it must be confessed the songs are often of a very dismal and enervating character. Columbus did a great deed when he crossed the ocean and discovered the fair, unknown land of promise; yet many of the songs in which we sing his fame sound a good deal like pæans of reproach. The prevailing sentiment appears to be that a person so manifestly ignorant and improper should never have been permitted to discover America at all.

This sickly tone is mirrored in much of the depressing literature of our day. It finds amplest expression in such joyless books as "The Heavenly Twins," the heroine of which remarks with commendable self-confidence

that "The trade of governing is a coarse pursuit;" and also that "War is the dirty work of a nation; one of the indecencies of life." She cannot even endure to hear it alluded to when she is near; but, like Athene, whose father, Zeus, "by chance spake of love matters in her presence," she flies chastely from the very sound of such ill-doing. Now on first reading this sensitive criticism, one is tempted to a great shout of laughter, quite as coarse, I fear, as the pursuit of governing, and almost as indecent as war. Ah! founders of empires, and masters of men, where are your laurels now? If some people in public life were acquainted with Mrs. Wititterly's real opinion of them," says Mr. Wititterly to Kate Nickleby, "they would not hold their heads perhaps quite as high as they do." But in moments of soberness such distorted points of view seem rather more melancholy than diverting. Evadne is, after all, but the feeble reflex of an over-anxious age which has lost itself in a labyrinth of responsibilities. Shelley, whose rigidity of mind was at times almost inconceivable, did not hesitate to deny every attribute of greatness wherever he felt

no sympathy. To him, Constantine was a "Christian reptile," a "stupid and wicked monster;" while of Napoleon he writes with the invincible gravity of youth. "Buonaparte's talents appear to me altogether contemptible and commonplace; incapable as he is of comparing connectedly the most obvious propositions, or relishing any pleasure truly enrapturing."

To the mundane and unpoetic mind it would seem that there were several propositions, obvious or otherwise, which Napoleon was capable of comparing quite connectedly, and that his ruthless, luminous fashion of dealing with such made him more terrible than fate. As for pleasures, he knew how to read and relish "Clarissa Harlowe," for which evidence of sound literary taste, one Englishman at least, Hazlitt, honored and loved him greatly. If we are seeking an embodiment of unrelieved excellence who will work up well into moral anecdotes and journalistic platitudes, the emperor is plainly not what we require. But when we have great men under consideration, let us at least think of their greatness. Let us permit our little

hearts to expand, and our little eyes to sweep a broad horizon. There is nothing in the world I dislike so much as to be reminded of Napoleon's rudeness to Madame de Staël, or of Cæsar's vain attempt to hide his baldness. Cæsar was human; that is his charm; and Madame de Staël would have sorely strained the courtesy of good King Arthur. Had she attached herself unflinchingly to his court, it is probable he would have ended by requesting her to go elsewhere.

On the other hand, it is never worth while to assert that genius repeals the decalogue. We cannot believe with M. Waliszewski that because Catherine of Russia was a great ruler she was, even in the smallest degree, privileged to be an immoral woman, to give "free course to her senses imperially." The same commandment binds with equal rigor both empress and costermonger. But it is the greatness of Catherine, and not her immorality, which concerns us deeply. It is the greatness of Marlborough, of Richelieu, and of Sir Robert Walpole which we do well to consider, and not their shortcomings, though from the tone assumed too often by critics and histo-

rians, one would imagine that duplicity, ambition and cynicism were the only attributes these men possessed; that they stood for their vices alone. One would imagine also that the same sins were quite unfamiliar in humble life, and had never been practised on a petty scale by lawyers and journalists and bank clerks. Yet vice, as Sir Thomas Browne reminds us, may be had at all prices. "Expensive and costly iniquities which make the noise cannot be every man's sins; but the soul may be foully inquinated at a very low rate, and a man may be cheaply vicious to his own perdition."

It is possible then to overdo moral criticism, and to cheat ourselves out of both pleasure and profit by narrowing our sympathies, and by applying modern or national standards to men of other ages and of another race. Instead of realizing, with Carlyle, that eminence of any kind is a most wholesome thing to contemplate and to revere, we are perpetually longing for some crucial test which will divide true heroism — as we now regard it — from those forceful qualities which the world has hitherto been content to call heroic. I have

heard people gravely discuss the possibility of excluding from histories, from school histories especially, the adjective "great," wherever it is used to imply success unaccompanied by moral excellence. Alfred the Great might be permitted to retain his title. Like the "blameless Ethiops," he is safely sheltered from our too penetrating observation. But Alexander, Frederick, Catherine, and Louis should be handed down to future ages as the "well-known." Alexander the Well-Known! We can all say that with clear consciences, and without implying any sympathy or regard for a person so manifestly irregular in his habits, and seemingly so devoid of all altruistic emotions. It is true that Mr. Addington Symonds has traced a resemblance between the Macedonian conqueror, and the ideal warrior of the Grecian camp, Achilles the strong-armed and terrible. Alexander, he maintains, is Achilles in the flesh; passionate, uncontrolled, with an innate sense of what is great and noble; but "dragged in the mire of the world and enthralled by the necessities of human life." The difference between them is but the difference between the heroic concep-

tion of a poet and the stern limitations of reality.

Apart, however, from the fact that Mr. Symonds was not always what the undergraduate lightly calls "up in ethics," it is to be feared that Achilles himself meets with scant favor in our benevolent age. "Homer mirrors the world's young manhood;" but we have grown old and exemplary, and shake our heads over the lusty fierceness of the warrior, and the facile repentance of Helen, and the wicked wiles of Circe, which do not appear to have met with the universal reprobation they deserve. On the contrary, there is a blithe good-temper in the poet's treatment of the enchantress, whose very name is so charming it disarms all wrath. Circe! The word is sweet upon our lips; and this light-hearted embodiment of beauty and malice is not to be judged from the bleak stand-point of Salem witch-hunters. If we are content to take men and women, in and out of books, with their edification disguised, we may pass a great many agreeable hours in their society, and find ourselves unexpectedly benefited even by those who appear least meritorious in our eyes. A

frank and generous sympathy for any much maligned and sorely slandered character, — such, for instance, as Graham of Claverhouse; a candid recognition of his splendid virtues and of his single vice; a clear conception of his temperament, his ability, and his work, — these things are of more real service in broadening our appreciations, and interpreting our judgments, than are a score of unqualified opinions taken ready-made from the most admirable historians in Christendom. It is a liberal education to recognize, and to endeavor to understand any form of eminence which the records of mankind reveal.

As for the popular criticism which fastens on a feature and calls it a man, nothing can be easier or more delusive. Claverhouse was merciless and densely intolerant; but he was also loyal, brave, and reverent; temperate in his habits, cleanly in his life, and one of the first soldiers of his day. Surely this leaves some little balance in his favor. Marlborough may have been as false as Judas and as ambitious as Lucifer; but he was also the greatest of English-speaking generals, and England owes him something better than pic-

turesque invectives. What can we say to people who talk to us anxiously about Byron's unkindness to Leigh Hunt, and Dr. Johnson's illiberal attitude towards Methodism, and Scott's incomprehensible friendship for John Ballantyne; who remind us with austere dissatisfaction that Goldsmith did not pay his debts, and that Lamb drank more than was good for him, and that Dickens dressed loudly and wore flashy jewelry? I don't care what Dickens wore. I would not care if he had decorated himself with bangles, and anklets, and earrings, and a nose-ring, provided he wrote "Pickwick" and "David Copperfield." If there be any living novelist who can give us such another as Sam Weller, or Dick Swiveller, or Mr. Micawber, or Mrs. Gamp, or Mrs. Nickleby, let him festoon himself with gauds from head to foot, and wedge his fingers "knuckle-deep with rings," like the lady in the old song, and then sit down and write. The world will readily forgive him his embellishments. It has forgiven Flaubert his dressing-gown, and George Sand her eccentricities of attire, and Goldsmith his coat of Tyrian bloom, and the blue silk breeches for

which he probably never paid his tailor. It has forgiven Dr. Johnson all his little sins; and Lamb the only sin for which he craves forgiveness; and Scott — but here we are not privileged even to offer pardon. "It ill becomes either you or me to compare ourselves with Scott," said Thackeray to a young writer who excused himself for some literary laxity by saying that "Sir Walter did the same." "We should take off our hats whenever that great and good man's name is mentioned in our presence."

OPINIONS.

It has been occasionally remarked by people who are not wholly in sympathy with the methods and devices of our time that this is an age of keen intellectual curiosity. We have scant leisure and scant liking for hard study, and we no longer recognize the admirable qualities of a wise and contented ignorance. Accordingly, there has been invented for us in late years, a *via media*, a something which is neither light nor darkness, a short cut to that goal which we used to be assured had no royal road for languid feet to follow. The apparent object of the new system is to enable us to live like gentlemen, or like gentlewomen, on other people's ideas; to spare us the labor and exhaustion incidental to forming opinions of our own by giving us the free use of other people's opinions. There is a charming simplicity in the scheme, involving as it does no effort of thought or mental adjustment, which cannot fail to heartily recom-

mend it to the general public, while the additional merit of cheapness endears it to its thrifty upholders. We are all accustomed to talk vaguely about "questions of burning interest," and "the absorbing problems of the day." Some of us even go so far as to have a tolerably clear notion of what these questions and problems are. It is but natural, then, that we should take a lively pleasure, not in the topics themselves, about which we care very little, but in the persuasions and convictions of our neighbors, about which we have learned to care a great deal. Discussions rage on every side of us, and the easy, offhand, cocksure verdicts which are so frankly confided to the world have become a recognized source of popular education and enlightenment.

I have sometimes thought that this feverish exchange of opinions received a fatal impetus from that curious epidemic rife in England a few years ago, and known as the "Lists of a Hundred Books." Never before had such an admirable opportunity been offered to people to put on what are commonly called "frills," and it must be confessed they made the most of it. The Koran, the Analects of Confucius,

Spinoza, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Xenophon, Lewis's History of Philosophy, the Saga of Burnt Njal, Locke's Conduct of the Understanding, — such, and such only, were the works unflinchingly urged upon us by men whom we had considered, perhaps, as human as ourselves, whom we might almost have suspected of solacing their lighter moments with an occasional study of Rider Haggard or Gaboriau. If readers could be made by the simple process of deluging the world with good counsel, these arbitrary lists would have marked a new intellectual era. As it was, they merely excited a lively but unfruitful curiosity. "Living movements," Cardinal Newman reminds us, "do not come of committees." I knew, indeed, one impetuous student who rashly purchased the Grammar of Assent because she saw it in a list; but there was a limit even to her ardor, for eighteen months afterwards the leaves were still uncut. It is a striking proof of Mr. Arnold's inspired rationality that, while so many of his countrymen were instructing us in this peremptory fashion, he alone, who might have spoken with authority, declined to add his name and

list to the rest. It was an amusing game, he said, but he felt no disposition to play it.

Some variations of this once popular pastime have lingered even to our day. Lists of the best American authors, lists of the best foreign authors, lists of the best ten books published within a decade, have appeared occasionally in our journals, while a list of books which prominent people intended or hoped to read "in the near future" filled us with respect for such heroic anticipations. Ten-volume works of the severest character counted as trifles in these prospective studies. For the past year, it is true, the World's Fair has given a less scholastic tone to newspaper discussions. We hear comparatively little about the Analects of Confucius, and a great deal about the White City, and the Department of Anthropology. Perhaps it is better to tell the public your impressions of the Fair than to confide to it your favorite authors. One revelation is as valuable as the other, but it is possible, with caution, to talk about Chicago in terms that will give general satisfaction. It is not possible to express literary, artistic, or national preferences without exposing one's

self to vigorous reproaches from people who hold different views. I was once lured by a New York periodical into a number of harmless confidences, unlikely, it seemed to me, to awaken either interest or indignation. The questions asked were of the mildly searching order, like those which delighted the hearts of children, when I was a very little girl, in our "Mental Photograph Albums." "Who is your favorite character in fiction?" "Who is your favorite character in history?" "What do you consider the finest attribute of man?" Having amiably responded to a portion of these inquiries, I was surprised and flattered, some weeks later, at seeing myself described in a daily paper — on the strength, too, of my own confessions — as irrational, morbid, and cruel; excusable only on the score of melancholy surroundings and a sickly constitution. And the delightful part of it was that I had apparently revealed all this myself. "Do not contend in words about things of no consequence," counsels St. Teresa, who carried with her to the cloister wisdom enough to have kept all of us poor worldlings out of trouble.

The system by which opinions of little or no value are assiduously collected and generously distributed is far too complete to be baffled by inexperience or indifference. The enterprising editor or journalist who puts the question is very much like Sir Charles Napier; he wants an answer of some kind, however incapable we may be of giving it. A list of the queries propounded to me in the last year or so recalls painfully my own comprehensive ignorance. These are a few which I remember. What was my opinion of college training as a preparation for literary work? What was my opinion of Greek comedy? Was I a pessimist or an optimist, and why? What were my favorite flowers, and did I cultivate them? What books did I think young children ought *not* to read? At what age and under what impulses did I consider children first began to swear? What especial and serious studies would I propose for married women? What did I consider most necessary for the all-around development of the coming young man? It appeared useless to urge in reply to these questions that I had never been to college, never read a line of Greek, never been

married, never taken charge of children, and knew nothing whatever about developing young men. I found that my ignorance on all these points was assumed from the beginning, but that this fact only made my opinions more interesting and piquant to people as ignorant as myself. Neither did it ever occur to my correspondents that if I had known anything about Greek comedy or college training, I should have endeavored to turn my knowledge into money by writing articles of my own, and should never have been so lavish as to give my information away.

That these public discussions or symposiums are, however, an occasional comfort to their participants was proven by the alacrity with which a number of writers came forward, some years ago, to explain to the world why English fiction was not a finer and stronger article. Innocent and short-sighted readers, wedded to the obvious, had foolishly supposed that modern novels were rather forlorn because the novelists were not able to write better ones. It therefore became the manifest duty of the novelists to notify us clearly that they were able to write very much better ones,

but that the public would not permit them to do it. Like Dr. Holmes, they did not venture to be as funny as they could. "Thoughtful readers of mature age," we were told, "are perishing for accuracy." This accuracy they were, one and all, prepared to furnish without stint, but were prohibited lest "the clash of broken commandments" should be displeasing to polite female ears. A great deal of angry sentiment was exchanged on this occasion, and a great many original and valuable suggestions were offered by way of relief. It was an admirable opportunity for any one who had written a story to confide to the world "the theory of his art," to make self-congratulatory remarks upon his own "standpoint," and to deprecate the stupid propriety of the public. When the echoes of these passionate protestations had died into silence, we took comfort in thinking that Hawthorne had not delayed to write "The Scarlet Letter" from a sensitive regard for his neighbors' opinions; and that two great nations, unvexed by "the clash of broken commandments," had received the book as a heritage of infinite beauty and delight. Art needs no apologist, and our great

literary artist, using his chosen material after his chosen fashion, heedless alike of new theories and of ancient prejudices, gave to the world a masterpiece of fiction which the world was not too stupid to hold dear.

The pleasure of imparting opinions in print is by no means confined to professionals, to people who are assumed to know something about a subject because they have been more or less occupied with it for years. On the contrary, the most lively and spirited discussions are those to which the general public lends a willing hand. Almost any topic will serve to arouse the argumentative zeal of the average reader, who rushes to the fray with that joyous alacrity which is so exhilarating to the peaceful looker-on. The disputed pronunciation or spelling of a word, if ventilated with spirit in a literary journal, will call forth dozens of letters, all written in the most serious and urgent manner, and all apparently emanating from people of rigorous views and limitless leisure. If a letter here or there — a *u*, perhaps, or an *l* — can only be elevated to the dignity of a national issue, then the combatants don their coats of mail, unfurl their

countries' flags, and wrangle merrily and oft to the sounds of martial music. If, on the other hand, the subject of contention be a somewhat obvious statement, as, for example, that the work of women in art, science, and literature is inferior to the work of men, it is amazing and gratifying to see the number of disputants who promptly prepare to deny the undeniable, and lead a forlorn hope to failure. The impassive reader who first encounters a remark of this order is apt to ask himself if it be worth while to state so explicitly what everybody already knows; and behold! a week has not passed over his head before a dozen angry protestations are hurled into print. These meet with sarcastic rejoinders. The editor of the journal, who is naturally pleased to secure copy on such easy terms, adroitly stirs up slumbering sentiment; and time, temper, and ink are wasted without stint by people who are the only converts of their own eloquence. "Embrace not the blind side of opinions," says Sir Thomas Browne, who, born in a contentious age, with "no genius to disputes," preached mellifluously of the joys of toleration, and of the discomforts of inordinate zeal.

Not very long ago, I was asked by a sprightly little paper to please say in its columns whether I thought new books or old books better worth the reading. It was the kind of question which an ordinary lifetime spent in hard study would barely enable one to answer; but I found, on examining some back numbers of the journal, that it had been answered a great many times already, and apparently without the smallest hesitation. Correspondents had come forward to overturn our ancient idols, with no sense of insecurity or misgiving. One breezy reformer from Nebraska sturdily maintained that Mrs. Hodgson Burnett wrote much better stories than did Jane Austen; while another intrepid person, a Virginian, pronounced "The Vicar of Wakefield" "dull and namby-pamby," declaring that "one half the reading world would agree with him if they dared." Perhaps they would, — who knows? — but it is a privilege of that half of the reading world to be silent on the subject. Simple preference is a good and sufficient motive in determining one's choice of books, but it does not warrant a reader in conferring his impressions upon the world.

Even the involuntary humor of such disclosures cannot win them forgiveness; for the tendency to permit the individual spirit to run amuck through criticism is resulting in a lower standard of correctness. "The true value of souls," says Mr. Pater, "is in proportion to what they can admire;" and the popular notion that everything is a matter of opinion, and that one opinion is pretty nearly as good as another, is immeasurably hurtful to that higher law by which we seek to rise steadily to an appreciation of whatever is best in the world. Nor can we acquit our modern critics of fostering this self-assertive ignorance, when they so lightly ignore those indestructible standards by which alone we are able to measure the difference between big and little things. It seems a clever and a daring feat to set up models of our own; but it is in reality much easier than toiling after the old unapproachable models of our forefathers. The originality which dispenses so blithely with the past is powerless to give us a correct estimate of anything that we enjoy in the present.

It is but a short step from the offhand opinions of scientific or literary men to the offhand

opinions of the crowd. When the novelists had finished telling us, in the newspapers and magazines, what they thought about one another, and especially what they thought about themselves, it then became the turn of novel-readers to tell us what *they* thought about fiction. This sudden invasion of the Vandals left to the novelists but one resource, but one undisputed privilege. They could permit us to know and they have permitted us to know just how they came to write their books; in what moments of inspiration, under what benign influences, they gave to the world those priceless pages.

> "Sing, God of Love, and tell me in what dearth
> Thrice-gifted Snevellicci came on earth!"

After which, unless the unsilenced public comes forward to say just how and when and where they read the volumes, they must acknowledge themselves routed from the field.

La vie de parade has reached its utmost license when a Prime Minister of England is asked to tell the world — after the manner of old Father William — how he has kept so hale; when the Prince of Wales is requested to furnish a list of readable books; when an

eminent clergyman is bidden to reveal to us why he has never been ill; when the wife of the President of the United States is questioned as to how she cooks her Thanksgiving dinner; when married women in private life draw aside the domestic veil to tell us how they have brought up their daughters, and unmarried women betray to us the secret of their social success. Add to these sources of information the opinions of poets upon education, and of educators upon poetry; of churchmen upon politics, and of politicians upon the church; of journalists upon art, and of artists upon journalism; and we must in all sincerity acknowledge that this is an enlightened age. "The voice of the great multitude," to quote from a popular agitator, "rings in our startled ears;" and its eloquence is many-sided and discursive. Albertus Magnus, it is said, once made a head which talked. That was an exceedingly clever thing for him to do. But the head was so delighted with its accomplishment that it talked all the time. Whereupon, tradition holds, St. Thomas Aquinas grew impatient, and broke it into pieces. St. Thomas was a scholar, a philosopher, and a saint.

THE CHILDREN'S AGE.

If adults are disposed to doubt their own decreasing significance, and the increasing ascendency of children, they may learn a lesson in humility from the popular literature of the day, as well as from social and domestic life. The older novelists were so little impressed by the ethical or artistic consequence of childhood that they gave it scant notice in their pages. Scott, save for a few passages here and there, as in "The Abbot" and "Peveril of the Peak," ignores it altogether. Miss Austen is reticent on the subject, and, when she does speak, manifests a painful lack of enthusiasm. Mary Musgrave's troublesome little boys and Lady Middleton's troublesome little girl seem to be introduced for no other purpose than to show how tiresome and exasperating they can be. Fanny Price's pathetic childhood is hurried over as swiftly as possible, and her infant emotions furnish no food for speculation or analysis. Saddest of all, Margaret Dashwood

is ignored as completely as if she had not reached the interesting age of thirteen. "A good-humored, well-disposed girl," this is all the description vouchsafed her; after which, in the absence of further information, we forget her existence entirely, until we are reminded in the last chapter that she has "reached an age highly suitable for dancing, and not very ineligible for being supposed to have a lover." In other words, she is now ready for treatment at the novelist's hands; only, unhappily, the story is told, the final page has been turned, and her chances are over forever.

I well remember my disappointment, as a child, at being able to find so little about children in the old-fashioned novels on our bookshelves. Trollope was particularly trying, because there were illustrations which seemed to promise what I wanted, and which were wholly illusive in their character. Posy and her grandfather playing cat's-cradle, Edith Grantly sitting on old Mr. Harding's knee, poor little Louey Trevelyan furtively watching his unhappy parents, — I used to read all around these pictures in the hope of learning more about the children so portrayed.

But they never said or did anything to awaken my interest, or played any but purely passive parts in the long histories of their grown-up relatives. I had so few books of my own that I was compelled to forage for entertainment wherever I could find it, dipping experimentally into the most unpromising sources, and retiring discomfited from the search. "Vivian Grey" I began several times with enthusiasm. The exploits of the hero at school amazed and thrilled me — as well they might; but I never comprehensively grasped his social and political career. Little Rawdon Crawley and that small, insufferable George Osborne, were chance acquaintances, introduced through the medium of the illustrations; but my real friends were the Tullivers and David Copperfield, before he went to that stupid school of Dr. Strong's at Canterbury, and lost all semblance of his old childish self. It was not possible to grow deeply attached to Oliver Twist. He was a lifeless sort of boy, despite the author's assurances to the contrary; and, though the most wonderful things were always happening to him, it never seemed to me that he lived up to his interesting surround-

ings. He would have done very well for a quiet life, but was sadly unsuited to that lively atmosphere of burglary and housebreaking. "Aladdin," says Mr. Froude, "remained a poor creature, for all his genii." As for Nell, I doubt if it would ever occur to a small innocent reader to think of her as a child at all. I was far from critical in those early days, and much disposed to agree with Lamb's amiable friend that all books must necessarily be good books. Nell was, in my eyes, a miracle of courage and capacity, a creature to be believed in implicitly, to be revered and pitied; but she was not a little girl. I was a little girl myself, and I knew the difference.

It was Dickens who first gave children their prestige in fiction. Jeffrey, we are assured, shed tears over Nell; and Bret Harte, whose own pathos is so profoundly touching, describes for us the rude and haggard miners following her fortunes with breathless sympathy:

"While the whole camp with 'Nell' on English meadows,
Wandered and lost their way."

At present we are spared the heartrending childish deathbeds which Dickens made so painfully popular, because dying in novels

has rather gone out of style. The young people live, and thrive, and wax scornful, and fill up chapter after chapter, to the exclusion of meritorious adults. What a contrast between the incidental, almost furtive manner in which Henry Kingsley introduces his delightful children into "Ravenshoe," and the profound assurance with which Sarah Grand devotes seventy pages to a minute description of the pranks of the Heavenly Twins. Readers of the earlier novel used to feel they would like to know a little — just a little more of Gus, and Flora, and Archy, and the patient nursery cat who was quite accustomed to being held upside down, and who went out "a-walking on the leads," when she was needed to accompany her young master to bed. Readers of "The Heavenly Twins" begin by being amused, then grow aghast, and conclude by wondering why the wretched relatives of those irrepressible children were not driven to some such expedient as that proposed by a choleric old gentleman of my acquaintance to the doting mother of an only son. "Put him in a hogshead, madam, and let him breathe through the bunghole!"

Two vastly different types of infant precocity have been recently given to the world by Mrs. Deland and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett, the only point of resemblance between their respective authors being the conviction which they share in common that children are problems which cannot be too minutely studied, and that we cannot devote too much time or attention to their scrutiny. Mrs. Deland, with less humor and a firmer touch, draws for us in "The Story of a Child," a sensitive, highly strung, morbid and imaginative little girl, who seems born to give the lie to Schopenhauer's comfortable verdict, that "the keenest sorrows and the keenest joys are not for women to feel." Ellen Dale suffers as only a self-centred nature can. She thinks about her self so much that her poor little head is turned with fancied shortcomings and imaginary wrongs. Most children have these sombre moods now and again. They don't overcome them; they forget them, which is a better and healthier thing to do. But Ellen's humors are analyzed with a good deal of seriousness and sympathy. When she is not "agonized" over her tiny faults, she is "tasting sin with

the subtle epicurean delight of the artistic temperament;" a passage which may be aptly compared with George Eliot's tamer description of Lucy Deane trotting by her cousin Tom's side, "timidly enjoying the rare treat of doing something naughty." The sensations are practically the same, the methods of delineating them different.

Mrs. Burnett, on the other hand, while indulging us unstintedly in reminiscences of her own childhood, is disposed to paint the picture in cheerful, not to say roseate colors. "The One I Knew the Best of All" was evidently a very good, and clever, and pretty, and well-dressed little girl, who played her part with amiability and decorum in all the small vicissitudes common to infant years. No other children being permitted to enter the narrative, except as lay figures, our attention is never diverted from the small creature with the curls, who studies her geography, and eats her pudding, and walks in the Square, and dances occasionally at parties, and behaves herself invariably as a nice little girl should. It is reassuring, after reading the youthful recollections of Sir

Richard Burton, with their irreverent and appalling candor, to be gently consoled by Mrs. Burnett, and to know with certainty that she really was such a delightful and charming child.

For Sir Richard, following the fashion of the day, has left us a spirited record of *his* early years, and they furnish scant food for edification. There was a time when unfledged vices, like unfledged virtues, were ignored by the biographer, and forgotten even by the more conscientious writer, who compiled his own memoirs. Scott's account of his boyhood is graphic, but all too brief. Boswell, the diffuse, speeds over Johnson's tender youth with some not very commendatory remarks about his "dismal inertness of disposition." Gibbon, indeed, awakens our expectations with this solemn and stately sentence: —

"My lot might have been that of a slave, a savage, or a peasant; nor can I reflect without pleasure on the bounty of nature which cast my birth in a free and civilized country, in an age of science and philosophy, in a family of honorable rank, and decently endowed with the gifts of fortune."

After which majestic preamble, we are surprised to see how little interest he takes in his own sickly and studious childhood, and how disinclined he is to say complimentary things about his own precocity. He writes without enthusiasm: —

"For myself I must be content with a very small share of the civil and literary fruits of a public school."

Burton, unhappily, had no share at all, and the loss of training and discipline told heavily on him all his life. His lawless and wandering childhood, so full of incident and so destitute of charm, is described with uncompromising veracity in Lady Burton's portly volumes. He was as far removed from the virtues of Lord Fauntleroy as from the brilliant and elaborate naughtiness of the Heavenly Twins; but he has the advantage over all these little people in being so convincingly real. He fought until he was beaten "as thin as a shotten herring." He knocked down his nurse — with the help of his brother and sister — and jumped on her. He hid behind the curtains and jeered at his grandmother's French. He was not pretty, and he was not picturesque.

"A piece of yellow nankin would be bought to dress the whole family, like three sticks of barley sugar."

He was not amiable, and he was not polite, and he was not a safe child on whom to try experiments of the "Harry and Lucy" order, as the following anecdote proves:

"By way of a wholesome and moral lesson of self-command and self-denial, our mother took us past Madame Fisterre's (the pastry cook's) windows, and bade us look at all the good things; whereupon we fixed our ardent affections on a tray of apple puffs. Then she said: 'Now, my dears, let us go away; it is so good for little children to restrain themselves.' Upon this we three devilets turned flashing eyes and burning cheeks on our moralizing mother, broke the window with our fists, clawed out the tray of apple puffs, and bolted, leaving poor Mother a sadder and a wiser woman, to pay the damages of her lawless brood's proceedings."

It is the children's age when such a story — and many more like it — are gleefully narrated and are gladly read. Yet if we must exchange the old-time reticence for unreserved

disclosures, if we must hear all about an author's infancy from his teething to his first breeches, and from his A B C's to his Greek and Latin, it is better to have him presented to us with such unqualified veracity. He is not attractive when seen in this strong light, but he is very much alive.

A FORGOTTEN POET.

THERE has been a vast deal of moralizing on the brevity of fame ever since that far-away day when mankind became sufficiently sophisticated to covet posthumous distinction. Yet, in reality, it is not so surprising that people should be forgotten as that they should be remembered, and remembered often for the sake of one swift, brave deed that cost no effort, or of a few lovely words thrown to the world in a moment of unconscious inspiration, when the writer little dreamed he was forging a chain strong enough to link him with the future. Occasionally, too, a species of immortality is conferred upon respectable mediocrity by the affection or the abhorrence it excites. The men whom Pope rhymed about because he hated them, the men to whom Lamb wrote so delightfully because he loved them, all live for us in the indestructible land of letters. It would be a hard matter to reckon up the sum of indebtedness which is thus innocently

incurred by those who have no coin of their own for payment.

Not long ago a writer of distinction was idling his way pleasantly through a volume of Mrs. Browning's poetry, when his attention was arrested by a quotation which stood at the head of that rather nebulous effusion, "A Rhapsody of Life's Progress." It was but a single line,

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath,"

and it was accredited to Cornelius Mathews, author of "Poems on Man." A foot-note, — people were more generous in the matter of foot-notes forty years ago than now — gave the additional and somewhat startling information that "Poems on Man" was "a small volume by an American poet, as remarkable in thought and manner for a vital sinewy vigour as the right arm of Pathfinder." This was stout praise. "The right arm of Pathfinder." We all know what sinewy vigor was *there;* but of Cornelius Mathews, it would seem, no man knew anything at all. Yet his poems had traveled far when they lay in Mrs. Browning's path, and of her admiration for

them she had left us this unstinted proof. Moreover the one line,

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath"

had in it enough of character and sweetness to provoke an intelligent curiosity. As a scholar and a man of letters, the reader felt his interest awakened. He replaced Mrs. Browning on the book shelf, and made up his mind with characteristic distinctness he would read the poems of this forgotten American author.

It was not an easy resolution to keep. A confident appeal to the public libraries of New York and Philadelphia brought to light the astonishing fact that no copy of the "Poems on Man" was to be found within their walls. The work had been published in several editions by Harper and Brothers between the years 1838 and 1843; but no forlorn and dust covered volume still lingered on their shelves. The firm, when interrogated, knew no more about Cornelius Mathews than did the rest of the reading world. The next step was to advertise for a second-hand copy; but for a long while it seemed as though even second-hand

copies had disappeared from the face of the continent. The book was so exceedingly rare that it must have been a universal favorite for the lighting of household fires. In the end, however, persevering effort was crowned with its inevitable success. "The works of Cornelius Mathews" were unearthed from some dim corner of obscurity, and suffered to see the genial light of day.

They comprise a great deal of prose and a very little verse, all bound up together, after the thrifty fashion of our fathers, in one portly volume, with dull crimson sides, and double columns of distressingly fine print. The "Poems on Man" are but nineteen in number, and were originally published in a separate pamphlet. They are arranged systematically, and are designed to do honor to American citizenship under its most sober and commonplace aspect. The author is in no way discouraged by the grayness of his atmosphere, nor by the unheroic material with which he has to deal. On the contrary, he is at home with farmers, and mechanics, and merchants; and ill at ease with painters and soldiers, to whom it must be confessed he preaches a little

too palpably. It is painful to consider what bad advice he gives to the sculptor in this one vicious line,

"Think not too much what other climes have done."

Yet, in truth, he is neither blind to the past, nor unduly elated with the present. He feels the splendid possibilities of a young nation with all its life before it; and earnestly, and with dignity, he pleads for the development of character, and for a higher system of morality. If his verse be uneven and mechanical, and the sinewy vigor of Pathfinder be not so apparent as might have been reasonably expected, I can still understand how these simple and manly sentiments should have awakened the enthusiasm of Mrs. Browning, who was herself no student of form, and who sincerely believed that poetry was a serious pursuit designed for the improvement of mankind.

In his narrower fashion, Mr. Cornelius Mathews shared this pious creed, and strove, within the limits of his meagre art, to awaken in the hearts of his countrymen a patriotism sober and sincere. He calls on the journalist to tell the truth, on the artisan to respect the

interests of his employer, on the merchant to cherish an old-time honor and honesty, on the politician to efface himself for the good of his constituency.

> "Accursed who on the Mount of Rulers sits,
> Nor gains some glimpses of a fairer day;
> Who knows not there, what there his soul befits, —
> Thoughts that leap up and kindle far away
> The coming time! Who rather dulls the ear
> With brawling discord and a cloud of words;
> Owning no hopeful object, far or near,
> Save what the universal self affords."

This is not heroic verse, but it shows an heroic temper. The writer has evidently some knowledge of things as they are, and some faith in things as they ought to be, and these twin sources of grace save him from bombast and from cynicism. Never in all the earnest and appealing lines does he indulge himself or his readers in that exultant self-glorification which is so gratifying and so inexpensive. His patriotism is not of the shouting and hat-flourishing order, but has its roots in an anxious and loving regard for the welfare of his fatherland. Occasionally he strikes a poetic note, and has moments of brief but genuine inspiration.

"The elder forms, the antique mighty faces,"

which lend their calm and shadowy presence to the farmer's toil, bring with them swift glimpses of a strong pastoral world. Not a blithe world by any means. No Pan pipes in the rushes. No shaggy herdsmen sing in rude mirthful harmony. No sun-burnt girls laugh in the harvest-field. Rusticity has lost its native grace, and the cares of earth sit at the fireside of the husbandman. Yet to him belong moments of deep content, and to his clean and arduous life are given pleasures which the artisan has never known.

"Better to watch the live-long day
The clouds that come and go,
Wearying the heaven they idle through,
And fretting out its everlasting blue.
Though sadness on the woods may often lie,
And wither to a waste the meadowy land,
Pure blows the air, and purer shines the sky,
For nearer always to Heaven's gate you stand."

The most curious characteristic of Mr. Mathew's work is the easy and absolute fashion in which it ignores the influence, and indeed the very existence of woman. The word "man" must here be taken in its literal significance. It is not of the human race that the author

sings, but of one half of it alone. No troublesome flutter of petticoats disturbs his serene meditations; no echo of passion haunts his placid verse. Even in his opening stanzas on "The Child," there is no allusion to any mother. The infant appears to have come into life after the fashion of Pallas Athene, and upon the father only depends its future weal or woe. The teacher apparently confines his labors to little boys; the preacher has a congregation of men; the reformer, the scholar, the citizen, the friend, all dwell in a cool masculine world, where the seductive voice of womankind never insinuates itself to the endangering of sober and sensible behavior. This enforced absence of "The Eternal Feminine" is more striking when we approach the realms of art. Does the painter desire subjects for his brush?

> "The mountain and the sea, the setting sun,
> The storm, the face of men, and the calm moon,"

are considered amply sufficient for his needs. Does the sculptor ask for models? They are presented him in generous abundance.

> "Crowned heroes of the early age,
> Chieftain and soldier, senator and sage;

The tawny ancient of the warrior race,
With dusky limb and kindling face."

Or, should he prefer less conventional types —

"Colossal and resigned, the gloomy gods
Eying at large their lost abodes,
Towering and swart, and knit in every limb;
With brows on which the tempest lives,
With eyes wherein the past survives,
Gloomy, and battailous, and grim."

With all these legitimate subjects at his command, why indeed should the artist turn aside after that beguiling beauty which Eve saw reflected in the clear waters of Paradise, and which she loved with unconscious vanity or ever Adam met her amorous gaze. Only to the poet is permitted the smallest glimpse into the feminine world. In one brief half-line, Mr. Mathews coldly and chastely allows that "young Love" may whisper something — we are not told what — which is best fitted for the poetic ear.

What an old-fashioned bundle of verse it is, though written a bare half century ago! How far removed fron the delicate conceits, the inarticulate sadness of our modern versifiers; from the rondeaux, and ballades, and pastels,

and impressions, and nocturnes, with which we have grown bewilderingly familiar. How these titles alone would have puzzled the sober citizen who wrote the "Poems on Man," and who endeavored with rigid honesty to make his meaning as clear as English words would permit. There is no more chance to speculate over these stanzas than there is to speculate over Hogarth's pictures. What is meant is told, not vividly, but with steadfast purpose, and with an innocent hope that it may be of some service to the world. The world, indeed, has forgotten the message, and forgotten the messenger as well. Only in a brief foot-note of Mrs. Browning's there lingers still the faint echo of what once was life. For such modest merit there is no second sunrise; and yet a quiet reader may find an hour well spent in the staid company of these serious verses, whose best eloquence is their sincerity.

DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUES have come back into fashion and favor. Editors of magazines look on them kindly, and readers of magazines accept them as philosophically as they accept any other form of instruction or entertainment which is provided in their monthly bills of fare. Perhaps Mr. Oscar Wilde is in some measure responsible for the revival; perhaps it may be traced more directly to the serious and stimulating author of "Baldwin," whose discussions are sufficiently subtle and relentless to gratify the keenest discontent. The restless reader who embarks on Vernon Lee's portly volume of conversations half wishes he knew people who could discourse in that fashion, and is half grateful that he does n't. To converse for hours on "Doubts and Pessimism," or "The Value of the Ideal," is no trivial test of endurance, especially when one person does three-fourths of the talking. We hardly know which to admire most: Baldwin,

who elucidates a text — and that text, evolution — for six pages at a breath, or Michael, who listens and "smiles." Even the occasional intermissions, when "Baldwin shook his head," or "they took a turn in silence," or "Carlo's voice trembled," or "Dorothy pointed to the moors," do little to relieve the general tension. It is no more possible to support conversation on this high and serious level than it is possible to nourish it on Mr. Wilde's brilliant and merciless epigrams. Those sparkling dialogues in which Cyril might be Vivian, and Vivian, Cyril; or Gilbert might be Ernest, and Ernest, Gilbert, because all alike are Mr. Wilde, and speak with his voice alone, dazzle us only to betray. They are admirable pieces of literary workmanship; they are more charming and witty than any contemporaneous essays. But if we will place by their side those few and simple pages in which Landor permits Montaigne and Joseph Scaliger to gossip together for a brief half hour at breakfast time, we will better understand the value of an element which Mr. Wilde excludes — humanity, with all its priceless sympathies and foibles.

Nevertheless, it is not Landor's influence, by any means, which is felt in the random dialogues of to-day. He is an author more praised than loved, more talked about than read, and his unapproachable delicacy and distinction are far removed from all efforts of facile imitation. Our modern "imaginary conversations," whether openly satiric, or gravely instructive, are fashioned on other models. They have a faint flavor of Lucian, a subdued and decent reflection of the "Noctes;" but they never approach the classic incisiveness and simplicity of Landor. There is a delightfully witty dialogue of Mr. Barrie's called "Brought Back from Elysium," in which the ghosts of Scott, Fielding, Smollett, Dickens, and Thackeray are interviewed by five living novelists, who kindly undertake to point out to them the superiority of modern fiction. In this admirable little satire, every stroke tells, every phantom and every novelist speaks in character, and the author, with dexterous art, fits his shafts of ridicule into the easy play of a possible conversation. Nothing can be finer than the way in which Scott's native modesty, of which not even Elysium

and the Grove of Bay-trees have robbed him, struggles with his humorous perception of the situation. Fielding is disposed to be angry, Thackeray severe, and Dickens infinitely amused. But Sir Walter, dragged against his will into this unloved and alien atmosphere, is anxious only to give every man his due. "How busy you must have been, since my day," he observes with wistful politeness, when informed that the stories have all been told, and that intellectual men and women no longer care to prance with him after a band of archers, or follow the rude and barbarous fortunes of a tournament.

For such brief bits of satire the dialogue affords an admirable medium, if it can be handled with ease and force. For imparting opinions upon abstract subjects it is sure to be welcomed by coward souls who think that information broken up into little bits is somewhat easier of digestion. I am myself one of those weak-minded people, and the beguiling aspect of a conversation, which generally opens with a deceptive air of sprightliness, has lured me many times beyond my mental depths. Nor have I ever been able to understand why

Mr. Ruskin's publishers should have entreated him, after the appearance of "Ethics of the Dust," to "write no more in dialogues." To my mind, that charming book owes its quality of readableness to the form in which it is cast, to the breathing-spells afforded by the innocent questions and comments of the children.

Mr. W. W. Story deals more gently with us than any other imaginary conversationalist. From the moment that "He and She" meet unexpectedly on the first page of "A Poet's Portfolio," until they say good-night upon the last, they talk comprehensively and agreeably upon topics in which it is easy to feel a healthy human interest. They drop into poetry and climb back into prose with a good deal of facility and grace. They gossip about dogs and spoiled children; they say clever and true things about modern criticism; they converse seriously, but not solemnly, about life and love and literature. They do not resolutely discuss a given subject, as do the Squire and Foster in Sir Edward Strachey's "Talk at a Country House;" but sway from text to text after the frivolous fashion of flesh

and blood; a fashion with which Mr. Story has made us all familiar in his earlier volumes of conversations. He is a veteran master of his field; yet, nevertheless, the Squire and Foster are pleasant companions for a winter night. I like to feel how thoroughly I disagree with both, and how I long to make a discordant element in their friendly talk; and this is precisely the charm of dialogues as a medium for opinions and ideas. Whether the same form can be successfully applied to fiction is at least a matter of doubt. Laurence Alma Tadema has essayed to use it in "An Undivined Tragedy," and the result is hardly encouraging. The mother tells the tale in a simple and touching manner; and the daughter's ejaculations and comments are of no use save to disturb the narrative. It is hard enough to put a story into letters where the relator suffers no ill-timed interruptions; but to embody it in a dialogue — which is at the same time no play — is to provide a needless element of confusion, and to derange the boundary line which separates fiction from the drama.

A CURIOUS CONTENTION.

WHAT an inexhaustible fund of quarrelsomeness lies at the bottom of the human heart! Since the beginning of the world, men have fought and wrangled with one another; and now women seem to find their keenest pleasure and exhilaration in fighting and wrangling with men. In literature, in journalism, in lectures, in discussions of every kind, they are lifting up their voices with an angry cry which sounds a little like Madame de Sévigné's "respectful protestation against Providence." They are tired, apparently, of being women, and are disposed to lay all the blame of their limitations upon men.

There is nothing very healthful in such an attitude, nothing dignified, nothing morally sustaining. Life is not easy to understand, but it seems tolerably clear that two sexes were put upon the world to exist harmoniously together, and to do, each of them, a share of the world's work. Their relation to

one another has been a matter of vital interest from the beginning, and no new light has dawned suddenly upon this century or this people. The shrill contempt heaped by a few vehement women upon men, the bitter invectives, the wholesale denunciations are as valueless and as much to be regretted as the old familiar Billingsgate which once expressed what Mr. Arnold termed "the current compliments" of theology. It is not convincing to hear that "man has shrunk to his real proportions in our estimation," because we are still in the dark as to what these proportions are. It is doubtless true that he is "imperfect from the woman's point of view," and imperfect, let us conclude, from his own; but whether we have attained that sure superiority which will enable us to work out his salvation is at least a matter for dispute. There is an ancient and unpopular virtue called humility which might be safely recommended to a woman capable of writing such a passage as this, which is taken from an article published recently in the "North American Review." "We know the weakness of man, and will be patient with him, and help him with his lesson.

It is the woman's place and pride and pleasure to teach the child, *and man morally is in his infancy.* Woman holds out a strong hand to the child-man, and insists, but with infinite tenderness and pity, upon helping him along."

The fine unconscious humor of this suggestion ought to put everybody in a good temper, and clear the air with a hearty laugh. But the desire to lead other people rather than to control one's self, though not often so naively stated, is by no means new in the history of morals. It must have fallen many times under the observation of Thomas à Kempis before he wrote this gentle word of reproof. "In judging others a man usually toileth in vain. For the most part he is mistaken, and he easily sinneth. But in judging and scrutinizing himself, he always laboreth with profit."

And, indeed, though it be true that in civilized communities a larger proportion of women than of men live lives of cleanliness and self-restraint, yet it should be remembered that the great leaders of spiritual thought, the great reformers of minds and morals, have invariably been men. All that is best in word and example, all that is upholding, stimulating,

purifying, and strenuous has been the gift of these faltering creatures, whom we are now invited to take in hand, and conduct with "tenderness and pity" on their paths. It might also be worth while to remind ourselves occasionally that although we women may be destined to do the work of the future, men have done the work of the past, and have struggled not altogether in vain, for the physical and intellectual welfare of the world. This is a point which is sometimes ignored in a very masterly manner. Eliza Burt Gamble who has written a book on "The Evolution of Woman. An Inquiry into the Dogma of her Inferiority to Man," is exceedingly severe on theologians, priests, and missionaries, by whom she considers our sex has been held in subjection. She lays great stress on certain material facts, as, for example, the excess of male births in times of war, famine, or pestilence; and the excess of female births in periods of peace and plenty, when better nutrition brings about this higher and happier result. She asserts that there are more male than female idiots, and that reversions to a lower type are more common among men than women. She has a

great deal to say about the ancient custom of wife-capture as a token of female superiority, and about the supremacy of woman in all primitive and prehistoric life, a supremacy founded upon her finer organization, and upon the altruistic principles which rule her conduct. But even in this spirited and elaborate argument no attempt is made to put side by side the work of woman and of man; no comparison is offered of their relative contributions to civilization, social progress, art, science, literature, music, or religion. Yet these are the tests by which preëminence is judged, and to ignore them is to confess a failure. "If you wish me to believe that you are witty, I must really trouble you to make a joke." If you are better than the workers of the world, show me the fruits of your labor.

Against this reasonable demand it is urged that never in the past, or at least never since those pleasant primitive days, of which, unhappily, no distinct record has been preserved, have women been permitted free scope for their abilities. They have been kept down by the tyranny of men, and have afforded through all the centuries a living proof that

the strong and good can be ruled by the weak and bad, physical force alone having given to man the mastery. It was reserved for our generation to straighten this tangled web, and to assign to each sex its proper limits and qualifications. The greatest change the world has ever seen is taking place to-day.

"However full the air may be of other sounds," said a recent lecturer on this subject, "the cry that rises highest and swells the loudest comes from the throats of women who in the last years of the nineteenth century of the Christian era are just beginning to live. Men cannot appreciate this as we do. From time out of mind they have used their brains and their instincts as they chose, and they cannot understand the ecstacy we feel as we stretch the limbs which have been cramped so long. What does it matter if they do not? One thing is sure. New wine is not put into old bottles. The village that has become a city does not return to its villageship. The man does not put on the child's garments again. So, whether men hate us or love us, we have outgrown the cage in which we sang. The woman of the past is dead."

It is not highly probable that universal hate will ever supplant that older emotion which must be held responsible for the existence and the circumstances of human life. But "the woman of the past" is a broad term, and admits of a good deal of variety, The chaste Susanna and Potiphar's wife; Cornelia and Messalina; Jeanne d'Arc and Madame de Pompadour; Hannah More and Aphra Behn, these are divergent types, and the singing bird in her cage does not stand very distinctly for any of them. Humanity is a large factor, and must be taken into serious account before we assure ourselves too confidently that the old order is passing away. For good or for ill, women have lived their lives with some approach to entirety during the slow progress of the ages. It can hardly be claimed that either Cleopatra or St. Theresa was cramped by confinement out of her broadest and amplest development.

Even if a radical change is imminent, there is no reason to be so fiercely contentious about it. Let us remember Dr. Watts, and be pacified. *Our* little hands were never made to tear each other's eyes. It is possible surely to

plead for female suffrage without saying spiteful and sarcastic things about men, especially as it is not their opposition, but the listless indifference of our own sex, which stands between the eager advocate and her vote. There is still less propriety in permitting this angry sentiment to bias our conceptions of morality, and we pay but a poor tribute to woman in assuming that she should be privileged to sin. The damnation of Faust and the apotheosis of Margaret make one of the most effective of stage illusions; but it is not a safe guide to practical rectitude, and we might do well to remember that it is not Goethe's final solution of the problem. In our vehement reaction from the stringent rules of the past, we are now assuming that the seven deadly sins grow less malignant in woman's hands, and that she can shift the burden of moral responsibility to the shoulders of that arch offender, man. The shameful evidence of the courts is bandied about in social circles, and made the subject-matter of denunciatory rhetoric on the part of those whom self-respect should silence. It does not strengthen one's confidence in the future, to see the present lack of moderation

and sanity in people who are going to reform the world. When wives and mothers meet to denounce with bitter eloquence the immorality of men, and then ask contributions for a monument to Mary Wollstonecraft, "who suffered social martyrdom in England a hundred years ago, for advocating the rights of woman," one feels a little puzzled as to the mental attitude of these impetuous creatures. A sense of humor would save us from many discouraging outbreaks, but humor is not a common attribute of reformers. It is the peace-maker of the world, and this is the day of contentions.

THE PASSING OF THE ESSAY.

It is the curious custom of modern men of letters to talk to the world a great deal about their work; to explain its conditions, to uphold its value, to protest against adverse criticism, and to interpret the needs and aspirations of mankind through the narrow medium of their own resources. A good many years have passed since Mr. Arnold noticed the growing tendency to express the very ordinary desires of very ordinary people by such imposing phrases as "laws of human progress" and "edicts of the national mind." To-day, if a new story or a new play meets with unusual approbation, it is at once attributed to some sudden mental development of society, to some distinct change in our methods of regarding existence. We are assured without hesitation that all stories and all plays in the near future will be built up upon these favored models.

To a few of us, perhaps, such prophetic voices have but a dismal ring. We listen to

their repeated cry, "The old order passeth away," and we are sorry in our hearts, having loved it well for years, and feeling no absolute confidence in its successor. Then some fine afternoon we look abroad, and are amazed to see so much of the old order still remaining, and apparently disinclined to pass away, even when it is told plainly to go. How many times have we been warned that poetry is shaking off its shackles, and that rhyme and rhythm have had their little day? Yet now, as in the past, poets are dancing cheerfully in fetters, with a harmonious sound which is most agreeable to our ears. How many times have we been told that Sir Walter Scott's novels are dead, stone dead; that their grave has been dug, and their epitaph written? Yet new and beautiful editions are following each other so rapidly from the press, that the most ardent enthusiast wonders wistfully who are the happy men with money enough to buy them. How many times have we been assured that realistic and psychological fiction has supplanted its gay brother of romance? Yet never was there a day when writers of romantic stories sprang so rapidly and so easily into

fame. Stevenson leads the line, but Conan Doyle and Stanley Weyman follow close behind; while as for Mr. Rider Haggard, he is a problem which defies any reasonable solution. The fabulous prices paid by syndicates for his tales, the thousands of readers who wait breathlessly from week to week for the carefully doled-out chapters, the humiliating fact that "She" is as well known throughout two continents as "Robert Elsmere,"— these uncontrovertible witnesses of success would seem to indicate that what people really hunger for is not realism, nor sober truthfulness, but the maddest and wildest impossibilities which the human brain is capable of conceiving.

And so when I am told, among other prophetic items, that the "light essay" is passing rapidly away, and that, in view of its approaching death-bed, it cannot be safely recommended as "a good opening for enterprise," I am fain, before acquiescing gloomily in such a decree, to take heart of grace, and look a little around me. It is discouraging, doubtless, for the essayist to be suddenly informed that his work is *in articulo mortis*. He feels

as a carpenter might feel were he told that chairs and doors and tables are going out of fashion, and that he had better turn his attention to mining engineering, or a new food for infants. Perhaps he endeavors to explain that a great many chairs were sold in the past week, that they are not without utility, and that they seem to him as much in favor as ever. Such feeble arguments meet with no response. Furniture, he is assured, — on the authority of the speaker, — is distinctly out of date. The spirit of the time calls for something different, and the "best business talent" — delightful phrase, and equally applicable to a window-frame or an epic — is moving in another direction. This is what Mr. Lowell used to call the conclusive style of judgment, "which consists simply in belonging to the other parish;" but parish boundaries are the same convincing things now that they were forty years ago.

Is the essay, then, in such immediate and distressing danger? Is it unwritten, unpublished, or unread? Just ten years have passed since a well-printed little book was offered carelessly to the great English public.

It was anonymous. It was hampered by a Latin title which attracted the few and repelled the many. It contained seven of the very lightest essays that ever glided into print. It grappled with no problems, social or spiritual; it touched but one of the vital issues of the day. It was not serious, and it was not written with any very definite view, save to give entertainment and pleasure to its readers. By all the laws of modern mentors, it should have been consigned to speedy and merited oblivion. Yet what happened? I chanced to see that book within a few months of its publication, and sent at once to London for a copy, thinking to easily secure a first edition. I received a fourth, and, with it, the comforting assurance that the first was already commanding a heavy premium. In another week the American reprints of "Obiter Dicta" lay on all the book counters of our land. The author's name was given to the world. A second volume of essays followed the first; a third, the second; a fourth, the third. The last are so exceedingly light as to be little more than brief notices and reviews. All have sold well, and Mr. Birrell has established

— surely with no great effort — his reputation as a man of letters. Editors of magazines are glad to print his work; readers of magazines are glad to see it; newspapers are delighted when they have any personal gossip about the author to tell a curious world. This is what "the best business talent" must call success, for these are the tests by which it is accustomed to judge. The light essay has a great deal of hardihood to flaunt and flourish in this shameless manner, when it has been severely warned that it is not in accord with the spirit of the age, and that its day is on the wane.

It is curious, too, to see how new and charming editions of "Virginibus Puerisque" meet with a ready sale. Mr. Stevenson has done better work than in this volume of scattered papers, which are more suggestive than satisfactory; yet there are always readers ready to exult over the valorous "Admirals," or dream away a glad half-hour to the seductive music of "Pan's Pipes." Mr. Lang's "Essays in Little" and "Letters to Dead Authors" have reached thousands of people who have never read his admirable translations

from the Greek. Mr. Pater's essays — which, however, are not light — are far better known than his beautiful "Marius the Epicurean." Lamb's "Elia" is more widely read than are his letters, though it would seem a heart-breaking matter to choose between them. Hazlitt's essays are still rich mines of pleasure, as well as fine correctives for much modern nonsense. The first series of Mr. Arnold's "Essays in Criticism" remains his most popular book, and the one which has done more than all the rest to show the great half-educated public what is meant by distinction of mind. Indeed, there never was a day when by-roads to culture were more diligently sought for than now by people disinclined for long travel or much toil, and the essay is the smoothest little path which runs in that direction. It offers no instruction, save through the medium of enjoyment, and one saunters lazily along with a charming unconsciousness of effort. Great results are not to be gained in this fashion, but it should sometimes be play-hour for us all. Moreover, there are still readers keenly alive to the pleasure which literary art can give; and the essayists, from Addison down to Mr. Arnold and

Mr. Pater, have recognized the value of form, the powerful and persuasive eloquence of style. Consequently, an appreciation of the essay is the natural result of reading it. Like virtue, it is its own reward. "Culture," says Mr. Addington Symonds, "makes a man to be something. It does not teach him to create anything." Most of us in this busy world are far more interested in what we can learn to do than in what we can hope to become; but it may be that those who content themselves with strengthening their own faculties, and broadening their own sympathies for all that is finest and best, are of greater service to their tired and downcast neighbors than are the unwearied toilers who urge us so relentlessly to the field.

A few critics of an especially judicial turn are wont to assure us now and then that the essay ended with Emerson, or with Sainte-Beuve, or with Addison, or with Montaigne, — a more remote date than this being inaccessible, unless, like Eve in the old riddle, it died before it was born. Montaigne is commonly selected as the idol of this exclusive worship. "I don't care for any essayist later than Mon-

taigne." It has a classic sound, and the same air of intellectual discrimination as another very popular remark: "I don't read any modern novelist, except George Meredith." Hearing these verdicts, one is tempted to say, with Marianne Dashwood, "This is admiration of a very particular kind." To minds of a more commonplace order, it would seem that a love for Montaigne should lead insensibly to an appreciation of Sainte-Beuve; that an appreciation of Sainte-Beuve awakens in turn a sympathy for Mr. Matthew Arnold; that a sympathy for Mr. Arnold paves the way to a keen enjoyment of Mr. Emerson or Mr. Pater. It is a linked chain, and, though all parts are not of equal strength and beauty, all are of service to the whole. "Let neither the peculiar quality of anything nor its value escape thee," counsels Marcus Aurelius; and if we seek our profit wherever it may be found, we insensibly acquire that which is needful for our growth. Under any circumstances, it is seldom wise to confuse the preferences or prejudices of a portion of mankind with the irresistible progress of the ages. Rhymes may go, but they are with us still. Romantic

fiction may be submerged, but at present it is well above water. The essay may die, but just now it possesses a lively and encouraging vitality. Whether we regard it as a means of culture or as a field for the "best business talent," we are fain to remark, in the words of Sancho Panza, "This youth, considering his weak state, hath left in him an amazing power of speech."

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09772 286 0